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THE LIFE

OF

WILLIAM WILBERFORCE:

BY HIS SONS,

ROBERT ISAAC WILBERFORCE, M. A.

VICAR OF EAST FARLEIGH, LATE FELLOW OF ORIEL COLLEGE;

AND

SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, M. A.

RECTOR OF BRIGHSTONE.

REVISED FOR THE AMERICAN EDITION

BY CASPAR MORRIS, M. D.

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CONTENTS OF VOL. II.

CHAPTER I.

	Page
Death of Fox—Passage of Bill for Abolition of Slave Trade— Contest for Yorkshire, - - - -	13

CHAPTER II.

Illness—East Indian Missions—Sunday Travelling—Hannah More's Cœlebs—Summer Retreat and Occupations, -	38
--	----

CHAPTER III.

Domestic Character—King's Illness—Feelings towards Dis- senterers—War with America—Correspondence with S. Roberts, Esq. - - - - -	60
---	----

CHAPTER IV.

Proposes retiring from representation of Yorkshire—Bible So- ciety—Feeling towards America—Death of Mr. Perceval— Retires from representation of Yorkshire, - -	84
---	----

CHAPTER V.

Parental Character—Rules for Conduct—Owen of Lanark— Roman Catholic Question—East India Missions, -	106
--	-----

CHAPTER VI.

Mad. De Stael—Social Character—Efforts to promote Abolition by Continental Powers—Emperor Alexander, -	129
---	-----

CHAPTER VII.

Private Usefulness—Death of H. Thornton and J. Bowdler— Corn Law Riots—Battle of Waterloo—Intercourse with Prince Regent, - - - - -	150
---	-----

CHAPTER VIII.

	Page
Abuse on account of Efforts for Negro Emancipation—Death of his Sister—Letters to Children—Political Disturbances—Interest in Hayti, - - - - -	170

CHAPTER IX.

Death of Princess Charlotte—Interest in Negroes—Mrs. Fry—Visit to the Lakes—Efforts for benefit of Hayti—Humility—Religious Anniversaries, - - - -	198
--	-----

CHAPTER X.

Death of Miss Martha More—Disturbances among the lower orders—Death of Dean Milner—Queen's case, -	219
--	-----

CHAPTER XI.

Family Religion—Death of eldest Daughter—Retirement at Marden Park—Death of Lord Londonderry—Letter to former Tutor—Efforts for West India Emancipation, -	235
--	-----

CHAPTER XII.

Barmouth—Retires from Parliament—Visits to Friends—Recollections of Public Characters, - - -	258
--	-----

CHAPTER XIII.

Extracts from Diary—Life at Highwood Hill—Tranquillity of his age—Various Sketches of Character, - -	279
--	-----

CHAPTER XIV.

Difficulties in Building Chapel—Loss of Fortune—Retires to his Sons' Houses—Final Efforts in the Cause of Emancipation, - - - - - -	294
---	-----

CHAPTER XV.

Illness and Death, - - - - -	311
Appendix, - - - - -	327

THE
LIFE OF WILBERFORCE.

CHAPTER I.

Death of Fox—Passage of Bill for Abolition of Slave Trade—Contest for Yorkshire.

THE death of Mr. Pitt dissolved the existing government, and the inheritance of his power was divided amongst the followers of Mr. Fox, Lord Grenville, Mr. Windham, and Lord Sidmouth. It was Mr. Wilberforce's general practice to support the King's government whenever he was able; and on this ground he now disclaimed at once all intentions of systematic opposition. He wished too, as far as possible, to conciliate their support in the approaching Abolition struggle; and greatly to the annoyance of many of his friends supported Lord Henry Petty in the contest for the representation of the University of Cambridge, which followed the death of Mr. Pitt.

Yet even to purchase support upon this question, he could not sacrifice his own independence. "Our great cause," he tells Mr. Gisborne, "has been considerably accredited by what has passed at the Cambridge election. Lord Henry Petty got a great deal of support, owing to his known zeal in it. His opponent Lord Palmerstone lost much owing to his being supposed, mistakenly I believe, to be our enemy; and numbers declared they would not, though satisfied in all other points, vote for an anti-abolitionist. So far well. The Chancellor of the

Exchequer comes from Cambridge in a good state of mind quoad hoc. Fox a decided friend. Grenville ditto. Lord Spencer I believe favourable, but not very strong. Lord Moira I doubt; Sidmouth, Ellenborough. Erskine talking friendly to me, but always absenting himself. Lord Fitzwilliam I am not quite sure, but I think favourable. Windham contra. But the great point would be to get if possible the royal family to give up their opposition. Stephen had a plan suggested by his warm zeal, that we should send a deputation to the new ministry, to make a sort of contract that we would befriend them as we did Pitt, i. e. give them a turn of the scale, &c. if they would promise us to support the Abolition as a government measure. The idea is inadmissible, both on grounds of rectitude and policy, (the two parties would infallibly have different ideas of the practical extent of the obligation, and mutual misunderstanding would ensue,) yet I think we ought to contrive that the effect intended by it may be produced; and though I dare scarcely be sanguine when I recollect with whom we have to do, yet I cannot but entertain some hopes that the wish to mollify, and even conciliate, a number of strange impracticable and otherwise *uncomeatable* fellows by gratifying them in this particular, may have its weight; at least it will tend to counteract the fear of offending the West Indians."

Upon these independent principles he acted from the first, and was compelled to oppose one of the earliest measures of administration.

The leading members of the new government understood his principles; and to his great joy entered heartily into his abolition views. "Consulting about Abolition. Fox and Lord Henry Petty talked as if we might certainly carry our question in the House of Commons, but should certainly lose it in the House of Lords. This looks but ill, as if they wished to please us, and yet not forfeit Prince of Wales' favour, and that of G. R. and other anti-abolitionists." Notwithstanding these expressions, he never questioned the sincerity of Mr. Fox's attachment to his cause; and he learned afterwards with pleasure, that

“the Prince had given his honour to Fox, not to stir adversely.” After many conferences, in the following week, “with Lord Grenville, Lord Sidmouth, Fox, Lord Henry Petty, Stephen,” he determined that a Bill for the prohibition of the Foreign Slave Trade (which would fix the advantages gained in the last year) should precede his general measure. This naturally followed Mr. Pitt’s Order in Council; and would have been moved by Lord Henry Petty in the former session, but for the dangerous illness of Lord Lansdown. It was judged right to intrust this measure in the Commons to one of the law officers of the Crown; and Lord Grenville agreed to introduce in the Lords, assuring Mr. Wilberforce that he should be “happy to promote the object in any way.” The subject was immediately entered upon. While this Bill was passing through the Commons, a similar one was introduced into the House of Lords, where it was carried triumphantly on the 10th of May. “I saw our strength,” says Lord Grenville, “and thought the occasion was favourable for launching out a little beyond what the measure itself actually required. I really think a foundation is laid for doing more and sooner than I have for a long time allowed myself to hope.” Mr. Wilberforce rejoiced in this success. “Sunday 18th. We have carried the Foreign Slave Bill, and we are now deliberating whether we shall push the main question. O Lord, do Thou guide us right, and enable me to maintain a spiritual mind amid all my hurry of worldly business, having my conversation in heaven.”

He had intended to follow up this measure by the general Bill, but after “meeting Fox at Lord Grenville’s, and holding some anxious consultations with them, and also with” his “own friends about the expediency of proposing the general question this year; when it was almost decided to try,” he “most reluctantly gave up the idea on Lord Grenville’s sure opinion, that no chance this session in the House of Lords; the Bishops going out of town, &c. But we are to have a general resolution for Abolition both in Commons and Lords. How wonderful are the ways of God, and how are we taught

to trust not in man but in Him ! Though intimate with Pitt for all my life since earliest manhood, and he most warm for Abolition, and really honest ; yet now my whole human dependence is placed on Fox, to whom this life opposed, and on Grenville, to whom always rather hostile till of late years, when I heard he was more religious. O Lord, Thou hast all hearts in Thy disposal : oh that it may be Thy will to put an end to this abhorred system."

The debate came on upon the 10th of June, when he moved an address, calling on the King to use his influence to obtain the co-operation of foreign powers : "a measure which it obviously would not be so proper for any of the King's ministers to bring forward."

The resolutions, which were proposed by the leading ministers, declared the Slave Trade to be "contrary to the principles of justice, humanity, and sound policy ;" and that the House would, "with all practicable expediency" proceed to abolish it. "We carried our resolutions 100 and odd to 14, and my address without a division. If it please God to spare the health of Fox, and to keep him and Grenville together, I hope we shall next year see the termination of all our labours." Before the session closed a Bill was passed rapidly through both Houses to prevent the employment in the Trade of any fresh ships.

During all this time county business had pressed hard upon him. Some of the taxes proposed by the new government were most injurious to his mercantile constituents. A projected tax on unwrought iron, was that which the manufacturers of Yorkshire most condemned. This he was a principal instrument in defeating, "It pleased God," he says, "that I got a good deal of credit in the iron business, having made myself master of it." This attention to commercial matters, and still more his conduct in the woollen trade inquiry, were highly valued in his county, and produced no small effect in the elections which so unexpectedly followed. The woollen trade inquiry involved "a very fatiguing parliamentary attendance." The committee "had sat above five weeks,"

on the 25th of May, and "continued till within a few days of the rising of parliament." During all which time he "never but one day was prevented from attending it."

After a long examination of witnesses, the Committee met to agree on their Report, "after wasting two or three mornings about it, reading it round a table—a sad way; they gave the preparation of it up to" him, "in a very confiding, but really very friendly manner." He "returned to Broomfield in the evening," intending at once to set about his task; but the following week was crowded with engagements. Tuesday was "the House of Lords debate on Fox's Slave Trade Resolution. Most gratifying, Ellenborough especially; and Lord Erskine—though theatrical. Carried it, 42 to 21. Lord Sidmouth as usual." Wednesday morning he was attending a committee, and not home till late in the evening. On Thursday and Friday he was "in town all day, and both nights at the House on Windham's Training Bill. Sunday drilling discussed." This evil custom he successfully resisted.

He took to himself no credit for this triumph. "How wonderfully," are his reflections on it, "does God teach us to look to him! In the Sunday drilling, the House of Commons against us, and Windham himself against us, yet by Windham's having admitted the clause, I hope we shall keep it in."

All this had interrupted the preparation of his Report. It was to be presented on the Monday, when he "put off the meeting of the Committee, thinking it would be better afterwards to have taken a day more, and done it well. And so it proved. Nobody asks afterwards how long it took, but how well done. Speaker complimented me much upon it. I carried it almost finished to the Committee, and all of them delighted with it, and most pleasingly liberal and kind." It was a masterly composition; laying clearly down the true principles upon which the trade must be conducted; befriending the domestic clothier whilst it freed the manufacturer from all needless and harassing restrictions.

But the state of Mr. Fox's health soon occupied all

his attention. June 27th. "William Smith with us after the House, and talking of poor Fox constrainedly; when at last, overcome by his feelings, he burst out with a real divulging of his danger—dropsy. Poor fellow, how melancholy is his case! he has not one religious friend, or one who knows any thing about it. How wonderful God's providence! How poor a master the world! No sooner grasps his long-sought object than it shows itself a bubble, and he is forced to give it up." "I am much affected by his situation. In great danger apparently. Oh that I might be the instrument of bringing him to the knowledge of Christ! I have entertained now and then a hope of it. God can do all things. His grace is infinite both in love and power. I quite love Fox for his generous and warm fidelity to the Slave Trade cause. Even very lately, when conscious that he would be forced to give up parliament for the session at least, he said "he wished to go down to the House once more to say something on the Slave Trade."

The cause of Abolition was now thought by men in general to be gained. Immediately after the Resolutions of June 24th, he was "congratulated" by a friend, the owner of a large West India property, "on the Abolition of the Slave Trade being carried, a work which you have had at your heart these twenty years. You will say I am superstitious, but I do not think I have ever done well in the world since I voted against it. Nothing has succeeded with me. I do not mean to say I am distressed, but my money has seemed so much dross, it turns to no account, or like sand is blown away. As you know my hand-writing I will not put my name, and only add that I am, my dear W., very affectionately yours."

But he knew that the struggle was not yet over, and until it was, he would not rest. "I am sick of bustle, and long for quiet, but I will not leave the poor slaves in the lurch." He found only a new motive for exertion in seeing that "the Abolition looked more promising than for many years." No measure was omitted which the most watchful prudence could suggest. The London

Committee, which had re-assembled in 1804, after an interval of seven years, and again held itself ready to act "subject to the call of Mr. Wilberforce," met regularly this year at his house "in Palace Yard;" and he made arrangements in various quarters for providing the evidence which the House of Lords might possibly require. Nor were his labours over, when leaving the neighbourhood of London towards the end of August, he "slipped into the snug and retired harbour of Lyme, for the purpose of careening and refitting." He had long designed writing an address upon the Slave Trade, and he now set resolutely to this task. "What was once known on that subject is now almost forgotten, and so many new members have come into parliament, that even for their sakes it is desirable to state what we do really hold." "Esteeming it also as one of the greatest honours of my life . . the greatest political honour . . that I have been called forth by Providence to be the advocate in this great cause, I think I ought to leave behind me some authentic record of the real nature and amount of the question." He had long postponed this work, that it might come out just before the subject was debated in the House of Lords.

Here he was soon followed by the account of Mr. Fox's death. "So poor Fox is gone at last. I am more affected by it than I thought I should be." "How speedily has he followed his great rival! Thurlow too gone. Independently of all other considerations, there is something which comes home to a man in the gradual quitting of the stage of those who are parts of the same *dramatis personæ* as himself. Even I seem to myself to be reminded that I am verging towards the close of the piece." "Well may we also be ready."

In the midst of quiet home occupations he was "shocked by a letter from Lord Grenville announcing a dissolution of parliament." "Sadly unsettled by the news." No time was to be lost. Upon the 21st he was on his way to Yorkshire. At "Blandford saw Fawkes's advertisement in the *Courier*, and first knew of opposition. Travelled on through Salisbury. Landlord asked

me for Cheap Repository tracts, saying those I had left had done great good, had reformed some of his men, had done himself good, and public too." On the road he addressed a letter to his constituents, and after an active canvass was triumphantly returned.

As soon as he returned home he "renewed his Slave Trade pamphlet," and continued hard at work upon it; quitting it only to engage in the necessary preparations for the approaching campaign.

He continued intent upon his work till near the end of January. At length, on the 27th, he made "a great effort to finish the book: which I did about six o'clock, and sent it to London, and it is to be out on the 31st, by dint of extreme exertion, and sent to the Lords."

He had expected much from the critical appearance of this book; and he was not disappointed. "Its beneficial effect," writes Mr. Roscoe, "could not escape the observation of any one, who attended the discussion in the Lords." Its effect was greatly strengthened by its mild and generous temper towards the defenders of the system. "In admiring your triumph," writes Mr. Hayley, "I also admire the lenity with which you adorn it. You treat your opponents with the mild magnanimity of a British admiral, who when the thunder of his cannon has reduced the ships of his enemies, exerts his fortitude and skill to rescue them from utter perdition."

The following extract from a letter to the Freeholders of Yorkshire, exhibits most forcibly his views on the subject of the certainty with which national punishments follow national crimes. How different is such an address from the violent party spirit which generally marks the character of such documents! "It is often rather in the way of a gradual decline," he says, "than of violent and sudden shocks, that national crimes are punished. I must frankly therefore confess to you that in the case of my country's prosperity or decline, my hopes and fears are not the sport of every passing rumour; nor do they rise or fall materially, according to the successive reports we may receive of the defeats or victories of Buonaparte. But he who has looked with any care into

the page of history, will acknowledge that when nations are prepared for their fall, human instruments will not be wanting to effect it : and lest man, vain man, so apt to overrate the powers and achievements of human agents, should ascribe the subjugation of the Romans to the consummate policy and powers of a Julius Cæsar, their slavery shall be completed by the unwarlike Augustus, and shall remain entire under the hateful tyranny of Tiberius, and throughout all the varieties of their successive masters. Thus it is, that most commonly by the operation of natural causes, and in the way of natural consequences, Providence governs the world. But if we are not blind to the course of human events, as well as utterly deaf to the plain instructions of revelation, we must believe that a continued course of wickedness, oppression, and cruelty, obstinately maintained in spite of the fullest knowledge and the loudest warnings, must infallibly bring down upon us the heaviest judgments of the Almighty. We may ascribe our fall to weak councils or unskilful generals ; to a factious and over-burdened people ; to storms which waste our fleets ; to diseases which thin our armies ; to mutiny among our soldiers and sailors, which may even turn against us our own force ; to the diminution of our revenues, and the excessive increase of our debt : men may complain on one side of a venal ministry, on the other of a factious opposition ; while amid mutual recriminations, the nation is gradually verging to its fate. Providence will easily find means for the accomplishment of its own purposes."

As soon as his book was out he was again engaged in action. The approaching debate called for every exertion. "Grenville told me yesterday he could not count more than fifty-six, yet had taken pains, written letters, &c. The Princes canvassing against us, alas." It seemed clear that he would have no easy triumph. Two Cabinet ministers never withdrew their opposition, and the Dukes of Clarence and of Sussex declared openly against the Bill, speaking, as it was understood, the sentiments of all the reigning family. Yet the ice of prejudice was rapidly dissolving ; and when he visited Lord

Grenville on the morning of the debate, "he went over the list of peers, and was sanguine, counting on above seventy in all." The same evening came the crisis of the struggle. "House of Lords, Abolition Bill till five in the morning, when carried, 72 and 28 proxies, to 28 and 6 proxies."

He had learned from frequent disappointments to look at the promise of success with a calm and tempered joy; but more from excess of anxiety than any exact apprehensions of danger. "I receive congratulations from all, as if all done. Yet I cannot be sure. May it please God to give us success." And on the day before the second reading he makes the following entry in his Diary:—"Never surely had I more cause for gratitude than now, when carrying the great object of my life, to which a gracious Providence directed my thoughts twenty-six or twenty-seven years ago, and led my endeavours in 1787 or 1788. O Lord, let me praise Thee with my whole heart: for never surely was there any one so deeply indebted as myself; which way soever I look I am crowded with blessings. Oh may my gratitude be in some degree proportionate."

It was in this spirit that he entered the House upon the 23d of February. "Busy for Lord Howick in the morning. Friends dined before House. Slave Trade debate. Lord Howick opened—embarrassed and not at ease, but argued ably. Astonishing eagerness of House; six or eight starting up to speak at once, young noblemen, &c., and asserting high principles of rectitude. Lord Milton very well. Fawkes finish, but too much studied, and cut and dried. Solicitor-General excellent; and at length contrasted my feelings, returning to my private roof, and receiving the congratulations of my friends, and laying my head on my pillow, &c., with Buonaparte's, encircled with kings his relatives. It quite overcame me." The House was little less affected by Sir Samuel Romilly's address. When he entreated the young members of parliament to let this day's event be a lesson to them, how much the rewards of virtue exceeded those of ambition; and then contrasted the feelings of the Empe-

ror of the French in all his greatness with those of that honoured individual, who would this day lay his head upon his pillow and remember that the Slave Trade was no more; the whole House, surprised into a forgetfulness of its ordinary habits, burst forth into acclamations of applause. They had seen the unwearied assiduity with which, during twenty years, he had vainly exhausted all the expedients of wisdom; and when they saw him entering with a prosperous gale, the port whither he had been so often driven, they welcomed him with applause "such as was scarcely ever before given," says Bishop Porteus, "to any man sitting in his place in either House of parliament." So full was his heart of its own deep thoughts of thankfulness that he scarcely noticed these unusual honours. "Is it true," Mr. Hey asked him, "that the House gave you three cheers upon the conclusion of the Solicitor-General's speech? And if so, was not this an unprecedented effusion of approbation?" "To the questions you ask me," he replies, "I can only say that I was myself so completely overpowered by my feelings when he touched so beautifully on my domestic reception, (which had been precisely realized a few evenings before, on my return from the House of Lords,) that I was insensible to all that was passing around me."

The debate proceeded with little show of opposition, except from one West Indian planter, who gave him an opportunity of replying in a speech "distinguished for splendour of eloquence and force of argument;"* and then came the cheering issue. "At length divided, 283 to 16." A good many came over to Palace Yard after House up, and congratulated me. John Thornton and Heber, Sharp, Macaulay, Grant and Robert Grant, Robert Bird and William Smith, who in the gallery." It was a triumphant meeting. "Well, Henry," Mr. Wilberforce asked playfully of Mr. Thornton, "what shall we abolish next?" "The lottery, I think," gravely replied his sterner friend. "Let us make out the names of

* . Ann. Register.

these sixteen miscreants; I have four of them," said William Smith. Mr. Wilberforce, kneeling, as was his wont, upon one knee at the crowded table, looked up hastily from the note which he was writing—"Never mind the miserable 16, let us think of our glorious 283." This was Reginald Heber's first introduction to Mr. Wilberforce. Heber had entered the room with a strong suspicion of his principles, but he left it saying to his friend John Thornton, "How an hour's conversation can dissolve the prejudice of years!" Perhaps his witnessing this night the Christian hero in his triumph after the toil of years, may have been one step towards his gaining afterwards the martyr's crown at Trichonopoly.

The next day was appointed for a public fast. "I was forced to write to the Duke of Gloucester, from whom, as also from Lord Grenville, most kind and pious letters of congratulation. Then St. Margaret's church. Returning, talked with Stephen on Slave Trade Abolition Bill. Then Lord Howick sent for me about clauses, and not back till late."

For some weeks he continued "very much occupied, making other matters bend to the Abolition." But on one important occasion of a different kind he took an active part, opposing the increased grant which ministers designed to give to the Roman Catholic College at Maynooth. Popery, he was convinced, was the true bane of Ireland, and he deemed it nothing less than infatuation to take any steps for its encouragement. This opinion he fearlessly asserted. "I am not," he said, "one of those men who entertain the large and liberal views on religious subjects, insisted on with so much energy by the honourable gentlemen on the other side; I am not so much like a certain ruler, of whom it has upon a late occasion been so happily said, that he was an honorary member of all religions." "Carried up the Bill to the Lords;" at which time it was supposed to be "clear that government was out, or as good as out." This "filled him with alarm about the Abolition Bill, lest it should fall through between the two ministries, neither being responsible, and the Bill perhaps being thrown out

by the absence of friends, and the attendance of sturdy Africans and West Indians, the Princes taking the lead." To his joy he was assured by Mr. Perceval, whose attachment to the cause was above all suspicion, "that Lords Eldon and Hawkesbury, as well as Castlereagh, declare that now they will lend themselves to any thing needful for giving effect to the measure."

But the honour of passing such a measure was not to be reserved for the new administration. Upon the 23d of March he "travelled about all the morning between Speaker, Leigh, and Lord Grenville; parliamentary office, and Whittam's; about error in the Abolition Bill." The debate upon the third reading in the Lords came on, the same evening, and the Bill was passed. Two days afterwards, "received the royal assent" . . . and passed into a law. It was the last act of the old ministry.

And now his labours were indeed completed. Congratulations poured in upon him from every quarter. "To speak," wrote Sir James Mackintosh from the other Indies, "of fame and glory to Mr. Wilberforce, would be to use a language far beneath him; but he will surely consider the effect of his triumph on the fruitfulness of his example. Who knows whether the greater part of the benefit that he has conferred on the world, (the greatest that any individual has had the means of conferring,) may not be the encouraging example that the exertions of virtue may be crowned by such splendid success? We are apt petulantly to express our wonder that so much exertion should be necessary to suppress such flagrant injustice. The more just reflection will be, that a short period of the short life of one man is, well and wisely directed, sufficient to remedy the miseries of millions for ages. Benevolence has hitherto been too often disheartened by frequent failures; hundreds and thousands will be animated by Mr. Wilberforce's example, by his success, and (let me use the word only in the moral sense of preserving his example) by a renown that can only perish with the world, to attack all the forms of corruption and cruelty that scourge mankind. Oh

what twenty years in the life of one man those were, which abolished the Slave Trade! How precious is time! How valuable and dignified is human life, which in general appears so base and miserable! How noble and sacred is human nature, made capable of achieving such truly great exploits!"

For himself, all selfish triumph was lost in unfeigned gratitude to God. "I have indeed inexpressible reasons for thankfulness on the glorious result of that struggle which, with so many eminent fellow-labourers, I have so long maintained. I really cannot account for the fervour which happily has taken the place of that fastidious, well-bred luke-warmness which used to display itself on this subject, except by supposing it to be produced by that almighty power which can influence at will the judgment and affections of men."

"Oh what thanks do I owe the Giver of all good, for bringing me in His gracious providence to this great cause, which at length, after almost nineteen years' labour, is successful!"

Mr. Wilberforce had been no unmoved spectator of the recent change of ministry. Most anxiously for the sake of his great cause, had he watched the several steps which led to their rupture with the King.

He was bound by his general principles to support the new ministry. "It is in one grand particular the same question as in 1784. My then principles, to which I still adhere, would govern my vote, even if I did not think so favourably of their leader, Perceval, as I do." But this he could not do without the appearance of ingratitude towards those who had assisted him so warmly in the Abolition struggle. Even to appear ungrateful gave him no little pain; but the law of duty was absolute, and he obeyed it strictly, finding only a new proof that "politics are a most unthankful business." "The debt of gratitude," he told his constituents, "which is due to the late ministry from myself, I shall ever be ready to acknowledge, and by all legitimate methods to repay; but I have no right to recompense their services by my par-

liamentary support. That is not mine to give or withhold at pleasure."

"My situation and feelings," he told Mr. Wrangham as early as the 24th of March, "are very embarrassing from the conflicting considerations and emotions which come into play. On the one hand, Lords Grenville, Howick, and Henry Petty have acted most zealously and honourably in the business of Abolition, and the success of that great measure, (for, blessed be God, we may now say it has succeeded, though in form the Bill has two stages more to pass through,) is, under a gracious Providence, to be ascribed to their hearty efforts. Yet on the other hand I feel deeply impressed with a sense of the importance of not embarking on a Roman Catholic bottom, (if I may so term it,) the interest and well-being of our Protestant empire."

On this ground he had boldly resisted the ministerial grant for enlarging the college of Maynooth, even when the tardy success of twenty years of labour seemed to be endangered by such honest opposition. No efforts were spared to gain him over; but there was a simplicity of view in all his public conduct, which made such attempts absolutely powerless.

In the midst of anticipations of a difficult and laborious session, he "was astonished by a letter from Perceval announcing a dissolution." This was most unwelcome intelligence. The angry feelings which had cost Mr. Lascelles his election in the last year were by no means allayed; and party spirit had been stirred to an unwonted pitch by late public events. He learned at once that his old colleague would again take the field; that Mr. Fawkes, though a man of large fortune, shrunk from the expenses of a contest; and that Lord Milton came forward in his place. No one could foresee the result of such a collision. In their calmer hours indeed all moderate men might think their own victory dearly purchased by the loss of their independent representative; but such feelings would be forgotten in the delirium of the conflict: while it is more than probable that the leaders in the strife would

view with no great dissatisfaction, a result which would share again between their families the representation of the county. Whatever was its issue, the contest must be ruinous to any man of ordinary fortune. "Lord Harewood" was "ready to spend in it his whole Barbadoes property," and Wentworth House was not less threatening in its preparations. Mr. Wilberforce's fortune would stand no such demands; "and the plan of a subscription," said a leading politician in an adjoining county, "may answer very well in a borough, but it is hopeless where things must be conducted upon such a scale as in the county of York." Many of his friends dissuaded him from entering on the contest; but the moral importance which he attached to it, determined him to venture the attempt, and after "sending on the 25th of April, expresses to Leeds and other places," and hearing on the 27th "the King's speech read by the Speaker round the table to standers-by . . . recommendation of union caught at by opposition" . . . he set himself off for York.

He left London upon the 28th, after "a narrow escape from breaking my leg" (an accident which would have been fatal to his hopes) "just when setting out—*Deo gratias*—how are we always in his hands!" Upon the 29th he entered Yorkshire, and was immediately engaged in the full bustle of the contest.

A meeting of his friends had been held on the preceding day at York; but whilst "Mr. Lascelles and Lord Milton had already engaged canvassing agents, houses of entertainment, and every species of conveyance in every considerable town," six important days elapsed before any number of his friends could be brought together. At length, upon the 4th of May, his principal supporters met at York, and agreed to establish local committees throughout every district, in the hope that voluntary zeal would supply the place of regular canvassing agents. Meanwhile he himself set out upon a hasty canvass of the West Riding, and traversed all its more populous parts with his usual rapidity and success. "Time was," as he said the year before, "when I did

not dislike such scenes;" but he had now reached a calmer age, and "sickened at a contest." In the tumult of popular applause which waited on his canvass, "I look forward," he tells Mr. Hey, "with pleasure to the prospect of a quiet Sunday with you, and rejoice that half the week is gone by; yet I am daily, hourly experiencing the never-failing mercies of Heaven." "I have often told you," he writes from Mr. Hey's to Mrs. Wilberforce, "that I never enjoy this blessed day so much as during a time of peculiar bustle and turmoil. It seems as if God graciously vouchsafed a present reward for our giving up to Him a liberal measure of that time and attention, which worldly men would deem necessary to the success of their worldly plans."

The nomination came on at York upon the 13th, and nearly every hand was held up in his favour. So far all was promising; but how the expenses of the approaching contest could be safely met, was a most serious question. The nomination was followed by a meeting of his friends, at which this subject was brought forward. He at once "declared with manly firmness, that he never would expose himself to the imputation of endeavouring to make a seat in the House of Commons subservient to the repair of a dilapidated fortune."* He claimed therefore the promises of support which had been liberally made, and called upon the county to assert its independence. Those who were present on that day, can still remember the effect produced by his appeal; and it was replied to nobly. "It is impossible," said a gentleman, who rose as soon as he sat down, "that we can desert Mr. Wilberforce, and therefore put down my name for £500." This example spread; about £18,000 was immediately subscribed; and it was resolved that his cause was a county object, and that he should not even be permitted to put down his name to the subscriptions opened to support his election.

The next day he set off to spend the few days which preceded the election in a canvass of the East Riding.

* Annual Register.

On reaching Hull he was met by a great body of freeholders at the hall of Sculcoates; "and when standing up to address them, it seemed," says an eye-witness, "as if he was struck by the scene before him—the fields and gardens where he had played as a boy, now converted into wharfs or occupied by buildings; and pouring forth the thoughts with which the change impressed him—the gradual alteration of external objects, and the still greater alteration which had taken place in themselves—he addressed the people with the most thrilling effect."

The next day was Sunday, and he was able to "bless God that his mind was pretty free from politics." "I walked with him," says the Rev. Mr. Dykes, "for a considerable time. We called upon various friends, and I was much struck to see how totally he had dismissed from his mind all thoughts of the approaching contest. His conversation related entirely to subjects which suited the day. He was speaking particularly about the words 'being made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light,' and seemed free from any sort of care about what was coming."

He returned to York on the day of election, (Wednesday, May 20th,) and here things assumed an unexpected aspect. The show of hands was against him; and on that day he was second, the next lowest, on the poll. This was in part owing to the want of conveyances, and to the impossibility of giving to volunteer supporters the order and arrangement of professional agents. Appearances were so unfavourable, that when his friends met at dinner after the conclusion of the poll—"I can see, gentlemen, clearly enough how this will turn out," said the barrister who had come from London as his professional adviser; "Mr. Wilberforce has obviously no chance, and the sooner he resigns the better." But if the combinations of regular discipline were more prompt in their effect, the vast muster of independent freeholders on the third day proved them to be no match for the voluntary zeal to which he trusted. "No carriages are to be procured," says a letter from Hull, "but

boats are proceeding up the river heavily laden with voters: farmers lend their wagons; even donkeys have the honour of carrying voters for Wilberforce, and hundreds are proceeding on foot. This is just as it should be. No money can convey all the voters; but if their feelings are roused, his election is secure."

"My having been left behind on the poll," he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce on the evening of Friday, "seemed to rouse the zeal of my friends, (I should rather say, of my fervent adherents,) they exerted themselves, and have mended my condition. You would be gratified to see the affliction which is borne me by many to whom I am scarcely or not at all known. Even those who do not vote for me seem to give me their esteem. I am thankful for the weather," (the preceding days had been rainy and boisterous,) "and indeed I am thankful for a quiet mind, which is placed above the storm."

How completely this was the case, may be better shown by the following letter to Mrs. Wilberforce.

"York, Sunday night, May 24.

"I am robbed of the time I meant to spend in writing to you, at least of a great part of it; but you will be glad to hear that I have spent on the whole a very pleasant Sunday, though this evening is of necessity passed in my committee-room. I have been twice at the Minster, where the sublimity of the whole scene once nearly overcame me. It is the largest and finest Gothic building probably in the world. The city is full of freeholders, who came in such numbers as to cover the whole area of the place (a very large one) where the service is performed, and every seat and pew were filled. I was exactly reminded of the great Jewish Passover in the Temple, in the reign of Josiah. It is gratifying to say that there was the utmost decency, and not the smallest noise or indecorum; no cockades or distinctive marks. Indeed, I must say, the town is wonderfully quiet, considering it is an election time. I am now writing in a front room, and I sat in one for two hours last night, and there was not the smallest noise or disturbance: no

more I declare than in any common town at ordinary times.

How beautiful Broomfield must be at this moment! Even here the lilacs and hawthorn are in bloom in warm situations. I imagine myself roaming through the shrubbery with you and the little ones; and indeed I have joined you in spirit several times to-day, and have hoped we were applying together at the throne of grace. How merciful and gracious God is to me! Surely the universal kindness which I experience, is to be regarded as a singular instance of the goodness of the Almighty. Indeed no one has so much cause to adopt the declaration, that goodness and mercy have followed me all my days. I bless God my mind is calm and serene, and I can leave the event to Him without anxiety, desiring that in whatever state I may be placed, I may adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour, and do honour to my Christian profession. But all is uncertain, at least to any human eye. I must say good-night. May God bless you. Kiss the babes, and give friendly remembrances to all family and other friends. If it has been as hot to-day with you as with us, (the wind east, thermometer 77, in the shade, about twelve,) you must have suffered greatly. Every blessing attend you and ours in time and eternity."

After the first few days it was only by great skill in managing a most unruly audience, that he could ever gain a hearing. "While Wilberforce was speaking the other day," writes Mr. Thornton, "the mob of Milton interrupted him: he was attempting to explain a point which had been misrepresented; he endeavoured to be heard again and again, but the cry against him always revived. 'Print, print,' cried a friend of Wilberforce in the crowd, 'print what you have to say in a hand-bill, and let them read it, since they will not hear you.' 'They read indeed,' cried Wilberforce; 'what, do you suppose that men who make such a noise as those fellows can read?' holding up both his hands; 'no men that make such noises as those can read, I'll promise you. They must hear me now, or they'll know nothing about the

matter.' Immediately there was a fine Yorkshire grin over some thousand friendly faces."

The poll was kept open for fifteen days, and until the twelfth he was daily in the full turmoil of this noisy scene. "Breakfasted daily at the tavern—cold meat at two—addressed the people at half-past five or six—at half-past six dined, forty or fifty, and sat with them. Latterly the people would not hear me, and shameful treatment. On Sundays allowed to be very quiet, to dine alone, and go twice to church." His temper of mind in the midst of this confusion was such as is rarely preserved in the rude shock of such a contest. "It was necessary," says Mr. Russel, one of his most active and friendly agents, "that I should have some private communication with him every day. I usually put myself in his way therefore when he came in from the hustings to dress for dinner. On each day as he entered I perceived that he was repeating to himself what seemed the same words: at length I was able to catch them, and they proved to be that stanza of Cowper's—

'The calm retreat, the silent shade,
With prayer and praise agree,
And seem by Thy sweet bounty made
For those that follow Thee.' "

Upon the twelfth day of the contest his active labours were suspended by a violent attack of epidemic disorder, which confined him to his room during the four days it still lasted. But though to all the other rumours that of his being dead was added, his victory was now secure. From the third day he continued to head the poll, and the final numbers as declared by the high sheriff were, for Wilberforce, 11,806, Milton, 11,177, Lascelles, 10,989.

Every nerve had been strained by the two great parties which were opposed to him. "Nothing since the days of the revolution," says the York Herald, "has ever presented to the world such a scene as this great county for fifteen days and nights. Repose or rest have been unknown in it, except it was seen in a messenger asleep upon his post-horse or in his carriage. Every day the

roads in every direction to and from every remote corner of the county have been covered with vehicles loaded with voters; barouches, curricles, gigs, flying wagons, and military cars with eight horses, crowded sometimes with forty voters, have been scouring the country, leaving not the slightest chance for the quiet traveller to urge his humble journey, or find a chair at an inn to sit down upon."

The mode in which the expenses of his contest were defrayed was not less remarkable than the fact of his success. When it had lasted little more than a week, £64,445 had been subscribed; and much of it from places with which he had neither political nor personal connexion. Contributions poured in unasked from London, Edinburgh, Birmingham, Colchester, Leicester, and many other towns. "My exertions," wrote the Rev. Thomas Robinson of Leicester, "for you in the last election proceeded not from the partiality of friendship, but from a strong sense of duty. With contested elections in this place I never interfere; but yours was an excepted case; and from your parliamentary conduct you had an irresistible claim for support, not only upon the county of York, but upon the kingdom at large." "Here are the first characters of whom the metropolis of the world can boast," said one of the West Riding addresses, "stepping forward not merely with their good wishes, but with their purses and their hearts opened. For a long series of years they have witnessed the parliamentary career of our invaluable friend—his manly eloquence, his astonishing activity, his undaunted perseverance, his unexampled disinterestedness—and shall Yorkshiremen maintain a cold indifference towards him?" The answer of his own county to this appeal was one gratifying feature in his triumph. So great were the numbers who insisted upon coming at their own charges, that whilst the joint expenses of his two opponents amounted to £200,000, the whole charge of bringing to the poll his great majority was but £28,600. Forty-six per cent. was returned upon the Yorkshire subscriptions. Those of the south consisted of two sums of £10,500;

one provisional, which was returned entire; and the other absolute, of which one-half only was employed. "Never," says Mr. Wilberforce, "shall I forget the spontaneous zeal with which numbers of all ranks came forward, subjecting themselves often to great trouble and fatigue, coming from considerable distances at their own expense, with other gratifying marks of attachment and esteem."

Some of these instances are worth recording. A freeholder presented himself to vote, whose appearance seemed to imply that the cost of his journey must be an inconvenient burden to him. The committee therefore proposed to him that they should defray his expenses. This he instantly declined. When, however, it appeared that he was a clergyman of very small means, who had travelled (and often on foot) from the farthest corner of the county, they renewed the same suggestion; and named a certain sum, which they pressed him to accept. "Well, gentlemen," he said at last, "I will accept your offer, and I request you to add that sum in my name to the subscription for Mr. Wilberforce's expenses."

"How did you come up?" they asked an honest countryman from the neighbourhood of Rotherham, who had given Mr. Wilberforce a plumper, and denied having spent any thing on his journey. "Sure enow I cam all'd-way ahint Lord Milton's carriage."

"Perhaps it may be thought," says Mr. Wilberforce in the letter which after the election he addressed to the free-holders, "that we too much neglected pride, and pomp, and circumstance; the procession, and the music, and the streamers, and all the other purchased decorations which catch the vulgar eye. That our more sober system was recommended to me by economical motives, I will not deny. This economy may perhaps by some be thought to be carried too far; yet when it is recollected that it was not my money, but that of my kind and public-spirited supporters, which was expended, no liberal mind will wonder at my having earnestly wished to be parsimonious. But shall I confess for my friends as well as for myself, that we acted from the impulse of

our taste, no less than from that of our judgment, when we declined all competition in parade and profusion? Our triumph was of a different sort. We may perhaps have too much indulged our love of simplicity; but to our eyes and feelings, the entrance of a set of common freeholders on their own, and those often not the best, horses, or riding in their carts and wagons, often equipped in a style of rustic plainness, was far more gratifying than the best arranged and most pompous cavalcade."

It is interesting to trace the secret safe-guards which kept his simplicity of mind untainted amidst such success and flattery. "Surely," are his private reflections, "it calls for deep humiliation, and warm acknowledgment, that God has given me favour with men, that after guiding me by His providence to that great cause, He crowned my efforts with success, and obtained for me so much good-will and credit. Alas, Thou knowest, Lord, all my failings, errors, infirmities, and negligences in relation to this great cause; but Thou art all goodness and forbearance towards me. If I do not feel grateful to Thee, oh how guilty must I be brought in by my own judgment! But, O Lord, I have found too fatally my own stupidity; do Thou take charge of me, and tune my heart to sing Thy praises, and make me wholly Thine." "When I look back on my parliamentary life, and see how little, all taken together, I have duly adorned the doctrine of God my Saviour, I am ashamed and humbled in the dust; may any time which remains, Lord, be better employed. Meanwhile I come to the cross with all my sins, negligences, and ignorances, and cast myself on the free mercy of God in Christ, as my only hope and refuge. Lord, receive and pardon me, and give me Thy renewing grace. Oh how inexpressibly valuable are the promises of Holy Scripture! Thy ways, O Lord, are not as our ways; Thou art infinite in love, as in wisdom, and in power. O may I never forsake Thee; guide me, guard me, purify me, strengthen me, keep me from falling, and at length present me faultless before the presence of Thy glory with exceeding joy.

"There is something so stupendously great in the sai-

vation of God, that when we are enabled to have some realizing sense of it, one is ready to cry out, ‘Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me; surely I am utterly unworthy of all Thy goodness and love. So thou art, but Christ is worthy; and He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied. And all the company of the redeemed, with the holy angels, and surely with myriads of myriads of beings, according to their several ranks, and orders, and faculties, and powers, shall join in adoring the infinite love of the Redeemer, and shall make up the chorus of that heavenly song, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honour, and glory, and blessing,’ &c. Oh may I bear a part in that bright and glad assemblage! Who will, who among them all can, have more cause than myself for gratitude and love? Meanwhile may I prove my gratitude on earth, by giving up myself to Thy service, and living universally to Thy glory. O Lord, enable me to be thus wholly Thine.”

“O Lord, I humbly hope that it is Thou who knockest at the door of my heart, who callest forth these more than usually lively emotions of contrition, desire, faith, trust, and gratitude. Oh may I hear His voice, and open the door and let Him in, and be admitted to intercourse and fellowship; may I be really a thriving Christian, bringing forth abundantly the fruits of the Spirit to the glory of God. O Lord, I am lost in astonishment at thy mercy and love. That Thou shouldst not only quit the glory and happiness of heaven to be made man, and bear the most excruciating torments and bitter degradation for our deliverance and salvation; but that Thou still bearest with us, though we, knowing all Thy goodness, are still cold and insensible to it. That Thou strivest with our perverseness, conquerest our opposition, and still waitest to be gracious; and that it was in the foreknowledge of this our base ingratitude and stupid perverseness, that Thou didst perform these miracles of mercy. That Thou knewest me, and my hardness, and coldness, and unworthy return for all Thy goodness, when Thou calledst me from the giddy throng, and shone into my heart with the light of the glory of God, in the face of Jesus Christ. O

well may we exclaim, 'Thy ways are not as our ways, nor Thy thoughts as our thoughts; but as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are Thy ways higher than our ways, and Thy thoughts than our thoughts.' O Lord, I cast myself before Thee, O spurn me not from Thee; unworthy, though I am, of all Thy wonderful goodness. . . O grant me more and more of humility, and love and faith, and hope, and longing for a complete renewal into Thine image. Lord help me and hear me. I come to Thee as my only Saviour. O be Thou my help, my strength, my peace, and joy, and consolation; my Alpha and Omega; my all in all. Amen."

"I have far too little thought of the dangers of great wealth, or rather of such affluence and rank in life as mine. O my soul, bethink thee of it; and at the same time bless God who has given thee some little knowledge of the way of salvation. How little also have I borne in mind that we are to be pilgrims and strangers on the earth! This impression can be kept up in those who are in such a state of prosperity and comfort as myself, by much prayer and meditation, and by striving habitually to walk by faith and to have my conversation in heaven." "O Lord, direct me to some new line of usefulness, for Thy glory, and the good of my fellow-creatures. I have been thinking of lessening the number of oaths."

CHAPTER II.

*Illness—East Indian Missions—Sunday Travelling—Hannah More's
Cœlebs—Summer Retreat and Occupations.*

THE meeting of the new parliament, which took place early in June, found him at his post, and he continued his attendance until its prorogation in August; and after a short sojourn at Brighton he returned to Broomfield.

weakness, but Thou canst strengthen the weakest, and hast promised that Thou wilt, if we earnestly pray to Thee. Lord, be with me, and strengthen me. Enable me to maintain a closer walk with Thee; and while I live a life of faith and hope, having my affections set on things above, may I discharge the duties of my station, so as to let my light shine before men, and adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things. Amen and Amen."

Amongst the memoranda of a day "set apart" shortly afterwards, the meeting of parliament being at hand, "for prayer and meditation and other religious exercises, with moderation in food," after acknowledging "God's mercy in his late recovery from sickness," he prays "above all for the love of God and my Redeemer, that this blessed principle may be like the mainspring of the machine, prompting all the movements, and diffusing its practical influence through every disposition, action, plan, and design. And (if it be consistent with the Divine will,) for a more assured hope of the favour of God and Christ. May the God of hope fill me with all joy and peace in believing, O Lord, do Thou break, soften, quicken, warm my cold heart; and teach me to feel an overflowing love and gratitude, or rather a deep and grateful sense of obligation, not as a transient effusion, but as the settled temper and disposition, the practical habit of my soul: that so I may here begin the song of praise, to be sung with more purified and warmed affections in heaven. Worthy is the Lamb; and blessing, honour, glory, and power, &c."

On the subject of the East Indian Missions, he wrote

TO W. HEY, ESQ.

"Near London, Feb. 5, 1808.

* * * * *

"You must have collected from the pamphlets that have been advertised, that the subject of East Indian missions has been interesting the public mind; but possi-

bly you may not have heard how active and earnest 'the enemy' has been (in writing to you I may call things by their true names) in stirring up opposition to any endeavours for diffusing Christian instruction throughout our East Indian empire. A motion has been made in the Court of Directors by one of the most able, experienced, wealthy, and well-connected members of their body; the effect of which would have been to bring home all the missionaries, to recall Buchanan by name as a culprit, and to prohibit the circulation or even translation of the Scriptures. The Court seemed in general but too well-disposed to such proceedings, but the most strenuous efforts were made by Mr. Grant and Mr. Parry, Lord Teignmouth and others, and happily the first attempt was defeated by a considerable majority; and we hope that, though it is dreadful to think what is the general opinion and feeling of the bulk of the higher orders on this whole subject, we shall be able to resist all the endeavours that are used to bar out the light of truth from those our benighted fellow-subjects. Mr. Perceval has stood our friend,—Buonaparte, by all accounts, is preparing on a great scale for an expedition to the East; and should this country use the powers of its government for the avowed purpose of shutting the Scriptures out of our Indian empire, how could we hope that God would not employ his French army in breaking down the barriers we had vainly and wickedly been rearing, and thus open a passage by which Christian light might shine upon that darkened land. The Dean's warnings have kept me out of town hitherto, but on Monday next I hope to return to London, and to attend parliament. Farewell, my dear sir.

I am yours most sincerely,
W. WILBERFORCE."

He now resumed his attendance at the "House almost every night," where he complains of the "debates" as "poor compared with former times; yet Perceval improved, and Canning extremely clever."

"Much worried, many committees. East Indian—

lottery—woollen committees. Friends at dinner before House. Letters." "11th. To town. Proclamation Society about Smithfield market. 14th. Heard that Danish Davis's Strait* settlers had not been attended to, and talked with Pole and Gambier about them. Was to dine at Broomfield, but stopped in town, and drove to Shadwell dock, Col. Mellish, about them." For a month he steadily renewed these applications, and at last succeeded in procuring the despatch of vessels on this work of mercy. Upon the 5th of May the "House" was "again on Maynooth business, and very hot and violent even to bitterness. I spoke—I hope not violently, but, alas! much bitterness in many. I reproached for Methodism. My own final judgment not made up on the Catholic Question—I strongly incline to their coming into parliament, though not to their seeing with other men's (priest's) eyes."

"May 28th. Catholic Question. Grattan's speech excellent and temperate. I spoke, and though abstaining from all reflections on popery, and arguing the question on grounds of time and circumstances, I was extremely abused." "We have had a very long and most unpleasant debate," he writes the next day. "It is grievous to see that we are only nominally a Protestant people." "Alas, they are driving the Roman Catholics to rebellion. How mad to be thus stimulating them, by telling them they are enslaved and oppressed! It is irreligion and immorality of which Ireland is sick. These popery has increased and fomented."

Business meanwhile was increasing on his hands. Private cases abounded. Clients of every kind crowded his ante-room and breakfast table; and friends flocked round him at all hours, and assembled daily at his easy and hospitable dinner. The parliamentary attendance was "the most severe" he "ever knew;" so that though "the country was exquisitely beautiful in the first burst of spring, or rather summer," he "never got to Broom-

* They consisted principally of Greenlanders under the charge of the Moravian brethren, and depended for sustenance on supplies from Europe.

field, being often absent from" his "family from Monday morning to Saturday night, or even Sunday morning." In truth he was ever watching at his post, the ready supporter, both in and out of parliament, of every moral and religious question. Every morning he was at "the Smithfield Market Committee, in the hope of altering the Monday market," though the "room was hot" and "little done. Parties so strong—ours most respectable, theirs far most numerous; so much so that painful to persevere, but we must please God, and assert His cause." "Shattered from a bad night, from being uneasy at not having reprobated M. A. Taylor's shameless declaration, 'that interest alone to be our guide, not right or justice.' The House only laughed, and he mistook it. I was over-persuaded, but I deeply repented, and still am sorry."

The eyes of Europe were now fixed upon the Spanish patriots, who promised an effectual resistance to the modern "scourge of God." "Sheridan would, against the advice of all the opposition friends, electrify the country on the Spanish business. He came down to the House, but the opportunity being delayed, he going upstairs got so drunk, as to make him manifestly and disgracefully besotted. Yet he seemed to remember a fair speech, for the topics were good; only he was like a man catching through a thick medium at the objects before him. Alas, a most humiliating spectacle; yet the papers state him to have made a brilliant speech, &c."

On this subject he wrote from East-Bourne, where he had fixed his summer quarters.

"East-Bourne, July 19, 1808.

"My dear Muncaster,

How many a mile are we now separated! yet, in confirmation of Cowper's beautiful line, 'How fleet is a glance of the mind!' in a moment I can fly on the wings of imagination, from the shore of the Channel to Julius Cæsar's old castle in Eskdale. It seems shamefully long since I wrote to you, but you have kindly let me know of your goings-on, for which I thank you.

“What an extraordinary spectacle is now exhibiting in Spain! Surely Buonaparte would not have proceeded as he has done, if he had not been absolutely intoxicated by his prosperity. To publish to the world that Joseph Buonaparte was to be King, and his children in hereditary succession to succeed to the crown after his death; and failing his issue, Louis and his heirs; and failing Louis, Jerome and his heirs: and failing all these, to revert to us, Napoleon! Surely this is so heaping insult on injury, that he might have foreseen that human nature would scarcely bear it. I have often thought that it might perhaps please God to pull down this giant when raised to his highest elevation, and apparently glorying the most reasonably, as well as most proudly, in his strength. Do you recollect the chapter in Isaiah, in which the prophet introduces the King of Assyria as at first boasting of his victories, and after having been reminded that he was but an instrument in the hand of the Almighty, he is represented as brought down to the pit amid contempt and derision. Lowth, I remember, justly states it to be, for its length, the finest poem almost in existence.”

He was the more deeply interested in the success of the Spanish arms from its apparent bearing on the cause of Abolition. These hopes he soon expressed to Mr. Stephen.

“My dear Stephen,

Just at present the Spanish patriots must necessarily be wholly engrossed by the exigencies of their own situation, but doubtless they are precisely in the circumstances in which, if it please God they succeed, (and may the Almighty favour them,) that generous temper of mind will be produced, which will abhor oppression and cruelty, consequently will abolish the Slave Trade. And surely we ought to be immediately taking all proper preparatory measures for diffusing information on the subject. Such prospects open to my view when I look around on both sides of the Atlantic, as quite to en-

rapture me. To the fertile soil of your mind let me commit the seed of this idea, and let me earnestly conjure you to give it immediate attention. Many of the priests appear to have joined the popular cause in Spain; probably, therefore, also, in Portugal. They may, perhaps, be worked on by the double motives of the spirit of liberty and of religion, to exert themselves for so glorious an object as ours. I will immediately write to Canning, desiring him to mention the subject to the Spanish deputies. Do you desire Perceval to do the same. I have an idea, also, of writing to Lord Holland, as well as to Brougham, whom we ought here to carry along with us, for his knowledge of Portugal people, &c. render him capable of being a useful ally. Farewell.

I am ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

At East-Bourne he had escaped the crowd of visitors who dogged his Broomfield hours, and he rejoiced in being able to associate freely with his family, and find some time for meditation and for study. But one great hinderance still remained. His letters still followed, pouring in upon him in multitudes. "They are become an unspeakable plague to me. They form my chief occupation, and I must contrive some means of lessening the time spent on them; for there is no acquisition of knowledge, no exercise or improvement of talents." Yet he was as far as possible from cultivating an idle and unmeaning correspondence. In truth, like his open house, and broken London mornings, it sprung of necessity from his peculiar situation. Without his letters he could not have been for years the advocate of every moral and religious cause; the friend and counsellor of all who were in need of counsel: the very Attorney-General of the unprotected and the friendless.

With "inconceivable sorrow" he heard just at this time "of all the schoolmasters being dismissed in Ceylon. We are to save only about £1500 by what is the moral and religious ruin of the island. O Lord, how deeply do we provoke Thy resentment! Yet have

mercy on us, and spare us, much as we deserve punishment. I have had some intercourse with Lord Castle-reagh about it." Happily he did not remonstrate fruitlessly; some of the old schools were restored, and the place of others supplied by new institutions.

East-Bourne was his head quarters until the 19th of November, when he took possession of a new house at Kensington Gore, of which he had bought a twenty-five years' lease in the preceding spring. It was not without "great regret that" he "gave up Broomfield, a place endeared to" him "by much happiness enjoyed in it, as well as by its own beauty. I give up also the living near my friends in this circle; yet I trust my connexion with them is so firm that the removal will not weaken it." The Dean of Carlisle suggested another incidental benefit, pointing out to him "a danger in living altogether at Clapham—danger of conceit and spiritual pride, and a cold, critical spirit. He imputes this less to me than to some others—but the danger great." Upon the whole, he thought "the change of residence best—may God bless it—I trust that it is made on grounds of which He approves." The distance of Broomfield made a London house essential to his parliamentary attendance, and separated him almost entirely from his family. By settling within a mile of Hyde Park Corner, he hoped to be much oftener with them; and by the exchange of "the old house in Palace Yard," for "lodgings on the Terrace, (for I must have a nest close to the House of Commons,)" he hoped to promote that economy by which he still kept up his ample charities.

These ends were in a measure answered. As long, indeed, as he sat for Yorkshire, and actively "represented a tenth part of England," he was often kept throughout the week at his lodgings in Westminster. Yet upon the whole he was more with his family; and from the size of his new house was able to exercise, with greater comfort, the hospitality in which he delighted. There are still many who remember with no little interest, the cheerful and enlightened intercourse of the house and grounds of Kensington Gore. The house

was seldom free from guests when he was in it. The first hours in the morning were all that he could strictly call his own, and these were spent in devotional exercises. "I always find that I have most time for business, and it is best done, when I have most properly observed my private devotions." "In the calmness of the morning," was his common observation, "before the mind is heated and wearied by the turmoil of the day, you have a season of unusual importance for communing with God and with yourself." After this secret intercourse with his heavenly Father, which cheered and sustained his laborious pilgrimage, he joined his assembled household for morning prayer—a service which he conducted himself, and with peculiar interest. With breakfast, which was thus made somewhat late, began his first throng of visitors. His ante-room, which still justified abundantly the witty simile of Hannah More, furnished many breakfast guests; and his extraordinary social powers were never seen to more advantage, than in drawing out and harmonizing all the shades of character and feeling which were here brought suddenly together. Thus whilst he was endeavouring to relax the stiffness of a "starched little fellow whom" he "was not anxious to disgust, Andrew Fuller was announced—a man of considerable powers of mind, but who bore about him very plainly the *vestigia ruris*. Not a moment was to be lost. So before he came in I said to my little friend, 'You know Andrew Fuller?' 'No, I never heard his name.' 'Oh then you must know him; he is an extraordinary man, whose talents have raised him from a very low situation.' This prepared the way, and Andrew Fuller did no harm, although he walked in looking the very picture of a blacksmith."

His household economy abounded in cheerful hospitality, and in the highest charms of conversation and social intercourse: but there was nothing costly or luxurious in his style of living; these were banished on principle, and none of his guests missed them. "You can do what you please," said a friend, who was celebrated for the excellence of his table; "people go to hear you

talk, not for a good dinner." "I am almost ashamed," was the thankful simplicity of his own remark when first entering Kensington Gore, "of the handsomeness of my house, my veranda, &c." "I am almost uneasy about my house and furniture, lest I am spending too much money upon it, so as to curtail my charities." The very next entry is a good commentary on this characteristic fear. "E. forced his way in to see me—the poor midshipman who about eight months ago wrote to me from Morpeth jail, at the suit of a tailor for uniform, whom I got released, and sent him a few pounds. He called to thank me, and said he should never forget my kindness—not ashamed of it; and would subscribe five pounds per annum to Small Debt Society. Eat yesterday a turkey, sent me by the person whom I helped to recover a landed estate of three or four hundred pounds per annum."

He was at this time meditating a trip to Bath, and wrote to Mr. Perceval to ascertain the day of meeting. "Parliament," was the reply, "will not meet unless something unforeseen at present should occur, until Monday the 16th of January. I hope therefore you will lose no time in getting your health well set up at Bath." His watchfulness for public morals at once suggested to him the amount of Sunday travelling which such a day of meeting would create; and he begged in answer, that it might, if possible, be altered.

"I thank you for your note of yesterday, rejoined the conscientious minister, "and am really sorry that I have given occasion for it. I feel myself the more to blame, because, upon the receipt of your note, it brought back to my recollection (what I had till then forgot) some observations which the Speaker made to me some time ago upon the same subject; if they had been present to my mind when we settled the meeting of parliament, I would not have fixed it upon a Monday. We were, however, almost driven into that day."

Two days later he wrote again.

“ Downing Street, Dec. 10, 1808.

“ Dear Wilberforce,

You will be glad to hear that it is determined to postpone the meeting of parliament till Thursday the 19th, instead of Monday the 16th, to obviate the objections which you have suggested to the meeting on that day.

Yours very truly,

SPENCER PERCEVAL.”

“ The House,” says his Diary, “ put off nobly by Perceval, because of the Sunday travelling it would have occasioned.”

The leisure of the Christmas holidays left him time to look at *Cœlebs*, which had just appeared. None of Hannah More's usual confidants had been let this time into the secret. and no rumour had betrayed its author. “ *Cœlebs*,” says his Diary, “ variously talked of. The Henry Thorntons affirm that it cannot be Hannah More's, and are strong against it, surely without reason.” His critical discernment was more faithful. “ Reading *Cœlebs* in the afternoon, and much pleased with it; it is Hannah More's all over.”

“ Kensington Gore, Jan. 7, 1809.

“ My dear Friend,

‘ What! did I not know thy old ward, Hal?’ I had not read ten pages before I was reminded of aut Erasmus, &c. And without paying you any compliments, I may say, that it is a piece in my judgment, of which you, even you, with all your well-earned and well-merited credit, need not be ashamed; on the contrary, I really am delighted with it, and have been kept up night after night reading it after supper. I hope too, which will please you better, that it will do as much good, as such a composition, from its very nature, and from the state of mind it necessarily generates, can do. It will, I trust, draw on to other and more serious studies. It will accredit true religion and its ministers, and its consistent professors. It will—but I must break off. I am come too late from London, and have to prepare for a large

party to dinner, preceded by a consultation on a matter of great importance to a friend."

It was with great anxiety he looked forward to the ensuing session of parliament, in which not only the foreign policy of the country, which would, he feared, "bring on war with America," was to be discussed, but the conduct of the Duke of York was to be made the subject of examinations of a character from which he shrunk in anticipation, and by which he was sickened and disgusted while in progress. With his usual independence of mind he pursued a course which drew upon him the increased hostility of the king and royal family—having not only voted against the ministry, but spoken on the subject.

In the midst of great political contentions, the morning of the 3d of May presented to him a more grateful sight. His views in joining the Bible Society have been explained already; and giving others credit for that pure spirit with which he was animated, he saw in its anniversary a "grand" and pleasing spectacle—"five or six hundred people of all sects and parties, with one heart, and face, and tongue." But this was only a moment's calm amidst the troubled scenes in which he was compelled to take an active part. "I want more time for reflection, and consideration of political subjects. The times are highly alarming. The Duke of York's affair, and parliament's conduct in it, has infused a general jealousy of public men. The House of Commons has lost the public confidence; there is no man of such talents as to take the ascendancy like Pitt or Fox. It would be worse to try to stifle inquiry than to prosecute it. Yet I see the people may be inflamed to madness, or at least to the most mischievous excesses and measures. Oh may He who rides in the whirlwind direct the storm for our good!"

During the year 1808-9, he took an active part in the discussion of the various matters which were brought before parliament. At one time provoking the ill-will of the King and royal family by opposing the wishes of

the Duke of York, and at another thwarting the views of ministry with the entire fearlessness of honest independence. Wishing to spend the summer of 1809 in quietness, the offer of a quiet parsonage near Cowper's haunts fell in exactly with all his inclinations. "I always observe," he would often say, "that the owners of your grand houses have some snug corner in which they are glad to shelter themselves from their own magnificence. I remember dining when I was a young man, with the Duke of Queensbury, at his Richmond villa. The party was very small and select—Pitt, Lord and Lady Chatham, the Duchess of Gordon, and George Selwyn, (who lived for society, and continued in it, till he looked really like the wax-work figure of a corpse) were amongst the guests. We dined early that some of our party might be ready to attend the opera. The dinner was sumptuous, the views from the villa quite enchanting, and the Thames in all its glory—but the Duke looked on with indifference. 'What is there,' he said, 'to make so much of in the Thames—I am quite tired of it—there it goes, flow, flow, flow, always the same.' " "What a blessing it is," remarks Mr. Wilberforce, this summer, on meeting an acquaintance who could not be happy out of London, "to have a taste for simple and virtuous pleasures! Religion gives this, but some have it naturally." He possessed it strongly, and enjoyed, therefore, exceedingly this "Cowperizing summer."

To Lord Muncaster he thus communicates the place of his retirement.

"Near Newport Pagnell, Sept. 1809.

"My dear Muncaster,

—And where is Wilber? I hear you saying. Near Newport Pagnell! Out comes Cary, and the inventive genius and geographical knowledge of the young ones are set to work; but I defy you all. The truth is, I had been long looking round for a ready-furnished house for a few weeks. Not being able to find one, I carried my household to our old quarters at East-Bourne, and there I should have been glad to continue till November, but

for its being so fully peopled that I could not walk out without being joined by people, my only connexion with whom arose from our inhabiting different numbers in the same row. I wished to pass a little time as much as possible with my family, of whom I literally see scarcely any thing during the whole session of parliament. Really too, though summer by the calendar, it has been so like winter by the weather, as to prompt me rather to look for some snug hiding-place, than to bask, without sunshine, on an open shore. I therefore am come inland, calling first to spend a day with the Speaker, whom I left contrary alike to our own feelings, and his kind pressing to stay; and then halting for five or six days with Henry Thornton, where I carried Mrs. Wilberforce and my six children to the same house in which were now contained his own wife and eight; but which he and I once inhabited as chums for several years, when we were solitary bachelors. How naturally I was led to adopt the old patriarch's declaration. With my staff I passed over, &c. and now I am become two bands! Thence we came to this place, where I inhabit the house of a friend, who having failed in his attempt to hire one ready furnished in the neighbourhood, has kindly lent me his own. It is the parsonage, and he occupies the house of the curate, who is now serving another church, and whom I provide with a temporary residence.

I must own that from my earliest days, at least my earliest travelling days, I never passed a parsonage in at all a pretty village, without my mouth watering to reside in it. And this longing has been still more powerful since the only objection, that of solitude, has been removed, by my bringing my own society along with me. The best of this place is, that though the immediate neighbourhood has no other beauties than those of peaceful rural scenery, yet we are near the scene of Cowper's rambles; and, devoted as I am to Cowper, the idea of treading in his track is not a little delightful. It is quite classic ground to me, and I shall read *both* his prose and his verse here with a double relish. I have once al-

ready, (but the day was bad, and I mean to do it again,) carried some cold meat to a venerable old oak, to which he was strongly attached. I have been to see Stowe with my charming young friend Bowdler, whom I think I introduced to you in London; if not, I have yet to introduce you to a man who will one day I think make a figure. How much was I impressed with the idea of grandeur's not being necessary to happiness!

My dear Muncaster, I wish we were within talking distance, I should have much both to say and to hear, but unless I had more time at command I feel no comfort in beginning upon political subjects. Oh! it is a gloomy sky, but there is a Sun behind the clouds. In one particular I quite agree with you, in ascribing all the great events which are taking place to a higher hand. Indeed He is always the supreme Agent, but there are times, and this seems to be one of them, when His arm is lifted up, and His hand displayed with more than common plainness. This consideration administers the greatest comfort to my mind. For being persuaded that there are many among us who still love, and fear, and serve the great Governor of the universe, I cannot but hope that, though justly deserving the vengeance, we shall experience still the mercy of Heaven. * *

Believe me ever, my dear Muncaster,

Yours most sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Leigh Richmond's neighbouring parsonage supplied a piano forte; and "music generally in the evening" was added to the other sources of his pleasure. Here he thoroughly enjoyed himself. Mr. Richmond was almost his only neighbour, and him he occasionally met with freedom and pleasure. "Dined at Richmond's. His old mother there. It is just twelve years since he became serious from reading my book on Christianity, lent him by a brother divine, who said, 'I am no reader,' and begged him to run it over, as he did in three days. He showed it me in the original cover." This naturally added to the pleasure which he always felt in seeing the

interior of a well-ordered parish. He attended with delight at a cottage reading, amongst many of "the people in their common working-clothes;" and he adds that "Richmond, who is a most affectionate, warm-hearted creature, has made great way in Turvey. Every body favours him, and God has greatly blessed his preaching." "Of Olney I hear but a very melancholy account. It is indeed an awful instance of mercies slighted and privileges abused. I suspect also from what I have heard, that some of the former ministers of the place, like my excellent friend Mr. Newton, not being quite enough on their guard respecting dissenting, and Dissenters, has been not unproductive of evil."

In this unusual quiet, "reading much, correcting the Practical View for a new edition, and much with" his "family," the weeks passed happily away. "Oh what a blessing it is to be living thus in peace! Surely no one has so much reason to say, that goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. Never was any one so exempted from suffering, so favoured with comforts. Oh that I were more grateful!"

Mr. John Bowdler's sketch of this time of peaceful harmony is so happily expressed, that though it has appeared in print already, it will be read again with pleasure.

"I arrived here last Saturday morning at breakfast-time, having been kept by Mr. Wilberforce much longer than I intended; but he is like the old man in Sinbad's Voyage—wo be to the traveller that falls into his grasp! It required a considerable effort to disengage myself, and I have promised another short visit on my return, which will be greatly to my inconvenience and delight. Mr. Wilberforce, I think, enjoys his parsonage as much as possible; to say that he is happier than usual is being very bold; but certainly he is as happy as I ever beheld a human being. He carried me one day to Weston, and we wandered over many a spot which Cowper's feet had trod, and gazed on the scenes which his pen had immortalized. On another day we visited Stowe—'a work to wonder at,' for we were still in the land of po-

etry and of music too, for Mr. Wilberforce made the shades resound to his voice, singing like a blackbird wherever he went. He always has the spirits of a boy, but" here "not little Sam himself can beat him, though he does his best."

"Yet this was no season of indolent recreation or mere idle enjoyment. Whilst he thanked God for "this wholesome retirement," he was most anxious to turn it to the best account. "O Lord," he prays, "direct and guide me, so as to make my residence here a blessing to me." And he watched as well as prayed. "Laying out" his "plans so as to secure time for evening devotions, emptying" his "mind of business and literature;" examining himself whether his "mind had wandered whilst reading the responses or the psalms in church, or during the singing of praises to God;" and reminding himself, "that if here I find not my mind ungovernable, yet that this is a most favourable situation: all about me favourable to holiness, except that I commonly find literature more seductive than any thing. I should then be striving for the habit of heavenly-mindedness, that I may maintain it in more worldly scenes and societies." Here therefore, as well as in the crowded life of London, he could exclaim upon his Sundays, "O blessed days these, which call us from the bustle of life, and warrant us in giving up our studies and our business, and cultivating communion with God."

Some days too he set apart in this season of retirement for more entire devotion to religious offices; and then, with such a measure of abstinence as his strength allowed, he gave the day to prayer and meditation. Deep at these times was his unfeigned humiliation, as he searched out before God all the suspected corners of his heart, condemning himself—for "selfishness, though I do not pass for selfish, and am not allowed to be so; Lord, increase my love to others"—for "ambition, or rather worldliness, but ill cured, often bubbling up and breaking out, though my judgment I trust does not allow them, and though I am ashamed of them"—for "want of love, of real caring for my fellow creatures"—for "want of

delighting in God. Alas! can I say that I find more pleasure in religious meditation than in literature, which always presents itself to my mind as an object of gratification?" Then too would he note down the remembered sins of long past years, feeling he had gained his end when he could add, "How does this review, in which my own mind fixes on specific objects, shame me! How should I be ashamed if others could see me just as I really am! I often think I am one grand imposture. My heart is heavy; oh, there is nothing that can speak peace to the wounded spirit, but the gospel promises—and the promise is sure. God is love; and is able to save to the uttermost, and he will cast out none who come to him. He it is I trust who has excited in me a disposition to come, and I will therefore press forward, humbly indeed, but trusting to His mercy who has promised so many blessings to them that seek Him. O Lord, yet strengthen me, and, if it please Thee, fill me with all peace and joy in the Holy Ghost. Amen."

At times too there are bursts of more than ordinary joy. "I humbly hope that I have felt this day, and still feel, somewhat of the powers of the world to come. I feel indeed the deepest sense of my own sinfulness; but blessed be God for His gracious promises. To Thee, O Lord, I humbly devote myself; O confirm me to the end. Make me perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle me. O *præclarum illum diem*." "What cause have I for thankfulness! Which way soever I look I am heaped up with blessings, mercies of all sorts and sizes. I wish not to spend time in writing, but, oh let me record the loving-kindness of the Lord."

In the midst of this life of quiet, his ordinary political cares startle us with their unwonted sound. "I opened the papers this morning to see if there is any confirmation of Buonaparte's madness; for I cannot but think it conformable to the providence of God, to manifest thus His ability in a moment to pull down the lofty from his vain-glorious throne, to confound the wisdom of the politic and the plans of the crafty. Lord Castlereagh and Canning fought a duel early on Thursday morning.

What a humiliating thing it is! In what a spirit must our national counsellors have been deliberating!"

A letter to Mr. Bankes, written on the second of October, turns upon these subjects.

"Then this strange hurricane of the elements of the administration. Could you have conceived any men's being so absurd, to say nothing of higher motives, as to make the public exhibition afforded by Castlereagh and Canning. I can only account for it in the former, to whom as the challenger it is nine parts in ten most probably to be ascribed, by his Irish education and habits. *Manent adhuc vestigia ruris*. I wish the King would declare that neither of them should ever serve him again in a public station. That would effectually prevent the spreading of the example."

Upon the 20th of November, his Buckinghamshire quarters were again exchanged for the neighbourhood of London.

He could not long be quiet within a mile of Hyde Park Corner. "Dined with Perceval; who very kind and good-natured; and pleased me more than ever before by his speech about not exciting a spirit against America." "My time," he tells Mr. Bankes, "was never more fully occupied when parliament was not sitting; foreseeing that when the House should meet, I must almost renounce all private society, I have been both giving and receiving a most unusual number of visits." These brought before him a most miscellaneous set of characters—from "Lord Sidmouth, who dined tête-à-tête, and much political talk with him," to "a missionary going to the Namaqua country," and "poor W. who declared most seriously that he liked spiders better than my dinner. 'Spiders are very good food;' and looking round the corners of the room, 'You have no spiders here,' as much as to say, I would soon convince you if you had—a singular man—appears a strong predestinarian."

Here, though mixing more freely in society, he did not forget to watch carefully for the improvement of his time.

His high sense of the value of it led him to watch over his conduct in society; and though probably unrivalled in the happy art of leading conversation to the most improving topics, yet he was often little satisfied with his attempts. Thus he says, after giving a "dinner to Lord N. and I. H. who chatted till late; Lord N. a strange twist; I fear the evening was sadly misspent. No efforts to improve the opportunity and impress them aright. When in my closet, as now, I feel a sincere desire to do good to others, and to embrace occasions for it; but, alas! when in society I am too apt to lose the sense of God's presence, or possess it feebly and faintly, and I do not try to turn the conversation, and practise the company regulations which I have made. Lord, quicken me." "I have a vast multiplicity of objects soliciting my attention . . . and I seem to myself to be failing in the discharge of the duties of my several relations, as member of parliament, as father, and as master. To Thee, O God, I fly, through the Saviour; enable me to live more worthy of my holy calling; to be more useful and efficient, that my time may not be frittered away unprofitably to myself and others, but that I really may be of use in my generation, and adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour. I long to carry the plan through for lessening the number of oaths—for reviving the Proclamation Society; but I am a poor, helpless creature, Lord, strengthen me."

During the session of parliament, which followed, his time, attention and feelings were all deeply interested by the subjects which came before it. Much attached as he was to Mr. Perceval, he voted against him in all the stages of the inquiry respecting the ill-fated Walcheren expedition; and in the case of Sir Francis Burdett, he opposed his committal to the Tower and spoke in behalf of a "reprimand." In Sir S. Romilly's Bill for reduction of Capital Punishments, he was also warmly interested, and as usual, the various details of the "Slave Trade," "Indian affairs," and many objects of charity and public usefulness received his support.

From these various employments he was suddenly re-

moved by an accident, which he describes in a letter to Lord Muncaster.

“ London, June 18, 1810.

“ My dear Muncaster,

The kindness which I have ever experienced at your hands assures me, that if you were to hear a loose report of my having been confined up-stairs for a week in a recumbent posture, you would become very uneasy till you should receive some authenticated report of my well-doing. You would, and you will nevertheless laugh heartily when you hear the whole story :—That playing at cricket with Mr. Babington, a ball struck my foot with great violence, and that by the positive injunctions of my surgeon, I have been ever since sentenced to a sofa. It will lessen the marvel, and render the tale less laughable, to hear that my son William was the main personage in the *dramatis personæ* of the cricket-players, and I have not played with him at cricket before, for I know not how long. But here, as in so many other instances, I have abundant cause for thankfulness to the good providence of God ; for Mr. Pearson (and there is not a more able surgeon in London) declares that if the ball had struck me an inch or too higher, and it is very uncommon for a ball to come along shaving the ground as that did, it would almost certainly have broken my leg.”

He much feared that he should not again reach the House of Commons before the prorogation. “ It is a great disappointment to me ; but I hope it is the indication of Providence that I am to be quiet.” But on the 20th, “ having the Sheffield Address, loyal and constitutional, and well signed,” he “ resolved to present it,” and so was carried to the door of the House, and limped to the Treasury Bench. “ I had prepared myself for a speech of an hour of closing advice, and useful parting admonition, but there not being above forty or fifty members, and as the appearance would evidently have been that of going cold-bloodedly to make a formal speech, I had

not nerves for it; yet wishing to say something, I could not abridge well." One object of this parting speech was to enforce the reasons by which he had been led a month before to vote for Mr. Brand's motion on Parliamentary Reform.

On the question of Reform in Parliament, he complains this spring: "All seems quiet now, but how little are men aware of the real dangers of the country! How little do they look forward to our probable state fifteen or twenty years hence!" His words seem almost prophetic of that storm of political excitement, in the midst of which the Reform Bill was at length carried through. How full may be their accomplishment, our children will best know.

CHAPTER III.

Domestic Character—King's Illness—Feelings towards Dissenters—War with America—Correspondence with S. Roberts, Esq.

THE garden at Kensington Gore was one of his great sources of pleasure, when his time was at his own command. During the sitting of parliament, he could "never get there sufficiently early, or stay there in the morning long enough, to witness the progress of the spring; but now that he had somewhat more leisure, whenever the weather made it possible, he sat long, both writing and with his books, under a spreading walnut-tree, which was known amongst his children as his study. "Pretty quiet to-day—went out and sat under walnut-tree, where now writing. I should like much to stay in this sweet place, amidst my books, if I could be quiet." "We are just one mile," he tells an American correspondent,* "from the turnpike-gate at Hyde Park Corner,

* The Hon. John Jay.

which I think you will not have forgotten yet, having about three acres of pleasure-ground around my house, or rather behind it, and several old trees, walnut and mulberry, of thick foliage. I can sit and read under their shade, which I delight in doing, with as much admiration of the beauties of nature (remembering at the same time the words of my favourite poet, 'Nature is but a name for an effect, whose cause is God') as if I were 200 miles from the great city." But in other respects he was less favourably circumstanced. "My situation near town produces numerous visitors, and frequent invitations, difficult and painful to resist."

These interruptions lasted as long as he remained near London. He longed for greater quiet, and soon afterwards withdrew into the country; and early in September took possession of an empty country-house, which the kindness of a friend had placed at his disposal. His own was lent at the same time, and he assured its inmates, "It is a pleasure to me that my house should be of use to my friends when I am away from it." "I always feel the more rewarded for the money I spent upon Kensington Gore, when my friends come to it freely, whether we are present or absent. For those who are occupying a friend's house in his absence, what so natural as to have another friend occupying their own? I only beg you will be in no hurry to quit."

One main purpose of his summer retirement was to "watch the tempers and dispositions of his children." "I mean," he tells Mr. Babington, "to make education my grand object. Pray for me, that I may be able to succeed. I can truly say I feel my own deficiencies." "We are about to quit our pleasant retirement," he tells Dr. Coulthurst, "pleasant, chiefly because it has been so retired, where we have been residing for about three months. This occasional abstraction from the bustle and turmoil of the world, is highly beneficial to mind, body, and estate; and I have had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with my own children, who, it really is not exaggeration to declare, seldom get a quiet minute with me during the sitting of parliament."

As he had not married until middle life, when he was most busily engaged in his engrossing duties, this was literally true. So long as they were infants, he had not time to seek amusement from them. Even whilst they were of this age, it made a deep impression on his mind when one of them beginning to cry as he took him up, the nurse said naturally by way of explanation, "He always is afraid of strangers." This he could not suffer to continue when they grew out of mere infancy. During the session indeed he was so busy, and so much from home, that he could see little of them through the week; but Sunday was his own, and he spent it in the midst of his family. His children, after meeting him at prayers, went with him to the house of God; repeating to him in the carriage hymns or verses, or passages from his favourite Cowper. Then they walked with him in the garden, and each had the valued privilege of bringing him a Sunday nosegay, for which the flowers of their little gardens had been hoarded all the week. Then all dined together, at an early hour, in the midst of cheerful, yet suitable conversation. "'Better,'" was one of his Sunday common-places, "says the wise man, 'is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox and hatred therewith;' but, my children, how good is God to us! He gives us the stalled ox and love too." Never was religion seen in a more engaging form than in his Sunday intercourse with them. A festival air of holy and rational happiness dwelt continually around him.

But with Sunday ended for the time the possibility of domestic life. "While the House is sitting I become almost a bachelor." When the session was over, and he had retired in the country, it was his delight to live amongst his children. His meals were as far as possible taken with them; he carried them out with him on little pleasurable excursions, and joined often in their amusements. Every day too he read aloud with them, setting apart some time in the afternoon for lighter and more entertaining books, (one of these this summer was the *Arabian Nights*,) and selecting one of them to read more serious works to him while he dressed. Happy was

the young performer who was chosen for the office. The early and quiet intercourse which his dressing-room afforded drew forth all a father's tenderness, whilst the reading was continually changed into the most instructive conversation.

All his efforts were aimed at opening the mind, creating a spirit of inquiry, and strengthening the powers; while he was jealous of such acquirements as yielded an immediate return, and so afforded opportunities for gratifying vanity.

All this time he was watching carefully the indications of their various character; and many a remaining entry of the long-past incidents of childhood, shows how observant was his eye of things of which he seemed to take no note. "—— a heavy-looking child, but showing at times much thought—used (in fact) in play yesterday Euclid's axiom, Things that are equal to the same are equal to one another." "—— has far more courage and character than all the other children." "Heard W. read to me for an hour after dinner one of Miss Edgeworth's Tales. How entirely free from religion is her morality, which however stolen from Scripture!" "Stopped to buy —— a book, because he was good yesterday—having much wished to go with the rest; and though at first he cried, he almost immediately got the better of it, and desired (our driving off being a little delayed) to come and wish me good-bye, which he did with a cheerful face. This deserves most serious consideration and suitable treatment."

The practical character of his personal piety was of the utmost moment in his treatment of his children. He was always on his guard against forcing their religious feelings, and shielded them carefully from the poison of Antinomian teaching. Though he never weakly withheld any necessary punishment, he did not attempt to dissemble the pain which its infliction cost him. "Alas!" he says at such a time, "—— grieved me much to-day, discovering the same utter want of self-government or self-denial when disappointed of any thing on which he had set his heart, as he had done before. He behaved

very ill. I talked with him plainly, and set him a punishment. Poor fellow! it made my heart heavy all the evening, and indeed ever since. But I hope he will mend. God will grant much to prayer; and I humbly trust it is our object to train him up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

This careful observation of his children's characters, joined with the most lively tenderness, is beautifully illustrated by a paper of directions which he drew up about this time for the private use of his two sons, who were now at school together.

BROTHERLY LOVE AND CONDUCT.

"Hints for my dear —, to be often read over, with self-examination.

- "1. Endeavour to bear in mind, that you will be often tempted to behave to your brother — not so well as you ought. That you may be on your guard against all such temptations—
- "2. Recollect, if you can, what the occasions are which have most commonly led you to behave ill to your brother, and try to keep them in your memory by now and then thinking them over; and when such occasions are about to occur, whether at play, in reading, or wherever else, then be doubly on your guard, and try to lift up your heart in an ejaculation to God, that you may be enabled to resist the temptation; and if you do resist it, lift up your heart again in thanksgiving.
- "3. Remember one season of temptation will always be, when you are at play, especially where there are sides, whether you are on the same side as — or not.
- "4. Remember it is not sufficient not to be unkind to your brother; you must be positively kind to all, and how much more then to a brother!
- "5. Remember you will be under a temptation to resist unkindly —'s disposition to command you. If Christ

tells us not to resent little outrages from any one, (see Matt. v. 39, 44,) how much less should you resent his commanding you! Though perhaps it may be not quite right in itself, yet an elder brother has a right to some influence from being such. See 1 Pet. v. 5.

“6. Often reflect that you are both children of the same father and mother; how you have knelt together in prayer; have played together as children, and have sat round the same table, on a Sunday, in peace and love. Place the scene before your mind’s eye, and recollect how happy mamma and I have been to see you all around us good and happy.

“7. You are not so lively by nature as he is, but be willing always to oblige him by playing at proper times, &c., though not disposed of yourself. Nothing more occurs to me, except, and this both mamma and I desire to press strongly on you, to desire you to be on your guard against being out of humour on a little raillery, and always to laugh at it; nothing shows good humour more than taking a joke without being fretful or gloomy.

“May God bless my dearest boy, and enable him to profit from the above suggestions of his most affectionate father,

W. WILBERFORCE.”

BROTHERLY LOVE AND CONDUCT.

“Hints for my dear ——, to be often looked over, with self-examination.

“1. Endeavour to bear in mind, that you will be often tempted to be not so kind to your brother —— as you ought to be. That you may be on your guard against the temptations when they do occur—

“2. Recollect, if you can, what the occasions are which have most commonly led you to be unkind to your brother, and keep them in your memory by now and then thinking them over; and when such occasions

are about to occur again, whether at play, in reading, or wherever else, then be doubly on your guard, and lift up your heart in prayer to God, that you may be enabled to resist the temptation; and if you have been enabled to get the better of it, lift up your heart to God again in thanksgiving.

- "3. Remember one season of temptation will always be, when you are at play, especially where there are sides, whether —— is on your side or on the opposite side.
- "4. Remember it is not enough not to be unkind to —— . We ought to be positively kind to all, but how much more so to a brother !
- "5. Remember you will be tempted to command him too much. Guard therefore against this temptation.
- "6. Sometimes reflect that he and you are children of the same parents. Recollect him a little fat child, and how we used to kiss his neck and call him Bon. Recollect how you have knelt together in prayer with mamma and me, and how especially on a Sunday, you have sat round the same table with us in peace and love. Try to place the scene before the eyes of your mind, and recollect how happy your mamma and I have appeared to see you all good and happy around us.
- "7. I will specify the times and circumstances in which you ought to be peculiarly on your guard against behaving improperly.—When you have done your own business, or are not inclined to do it, beware of interrupting him in doing his.—When you are with older companions than yourself, beware of behaving to him less kindly, or with any thing like arrogance.—When you are in the highest spirits, having been at play or from whatever other cause, you are apt to lose your self-government, and to be out of humour on having your inclination crossed in any way. Beware in such circumstances of being unkind to him.

"May God bless my dearest ——, and enable him to

profit from the above suggestions of his most affectionate father,

W. WILBERFORCE."

These hints afford a fair sample of his mode of managing his children. He constantly referred them to the highest principles of action. Education, indeed, when otherwise conducted, he always looked at with suspicion. "William Allen," he says shortly afterwards, "and Joseph Fox came about Lancaster's schools to tell me all about them, and press me to be a vice-president. Heard Fox's most interesting account." For a fortnight he was doubtful how to answer this appeal; but having fully weighed the question, he "wrote to William Allen to decline being a committee man, though it gave me great pain to refuse him; but emulation and vanity are the vital breath of the system."

All public business was deferred by the illness of the King, and the continual hopes which were held forth of his speedy convalescence. "Our beloved old King the physicians declare is recovering, and they have scarcely a doubt of his being even speedily well, if his restoration be not retarded by some of the circumstances which if he were not a King, he would not experience." "Dec. 9th. The King getting better but with occasional relapses. Perceval said on Thursday, that as well then as when Thurlow declared him well, and sealed the commission in 1789. I believe it. I remember that it was then said in private that the King was not quite well." These hopes were continually deferred, and the examination of the royal physicians before a committee of the House of Commons, (of which he was a member,) was the only public business which engaged him before Christmas; yet he was fully occupied.

He still manifested the same anxious interest and devoted himself with the same untiring zeal to the cause of Africa as had marked his character during the long struggle for the abolition of the slave trade. It was with great pain he heard that no efforts were making for the improvement of the slaves in the West India Islands, and

he projected an institution for the religious instruction of their children, and drew up a memorandum of subjects of action and deliberation for abolitionists embracing no less than thirteen separate heads. All this required much labour, and he incurred it freely, yet his zeal for that great cause never led him to neglect any opportunity of doing present good. He was just as active in redressing individual wrongs, just as ready to assist the distress, and poverty, and friendlessness which surrounded his own doors as to labour in the world's eye for the ill-used tribes of Africa. This, while it increased his usefulness, saved him also from that diseased contraction of thought and feeling which is so apt to grow on those who are identified with one pursuit. He was the very opposite of "Mr. Fantom." The healthy vigour of benevolent exertion was ever fostered in his mind by his mingling individual acts of kindness with all his general plans. Thus whilst he was "calling upon Perceval, and discussing with Macaulay, Stephen, Brougham, and others, about African and West Indian matters," he was also "off early to London to the War Office about the boy Nowell, unlawfully recruited;" and finding that Lord Palmerston had not yet read the minutes of the second examination, which decisive, he went on "to the Colonial Office about the case of Marsden and a poor woman," getting home at last "too late for dinner;" and being "off" again next morning "after breakfast to the Horse Guards, where talked to Lord Palmerston about the poor boy," and got the necessary "orders sent down for his discharge;" and this is only a sample of a multitude of works of mercy in which he was every day engaged. And yet he could say in his most private entries, "Alas! I feel my uselessness and unprofitableness, but I humbly hope I desire to employ my faculties so as may be most for God's glory, and my fellow-creatures' benefit." It was this high motive which gave such uniformity to his conduct. "I hear," says his Diary, with beautiful simplicity, a few weeks later, "that I am likely to be popular now amongst the West Riding clothiers, about poor Nowell, the boy falsely enlisted. How

this shows that God can effect whatever He will, by means the most circuitous and the least looked for. This might have a great effect in case of an election."

With the new year set in the full tide of public business. The King's illness was painfully confirmed, and the appointment of a regency inevitable. In these circumstances the mind of Mr. Pitt's friend reverted naturally to the debates of 1788; and to the great actors in that drama who had left the stage before himself. His mind was constitutionally free from that fretfulness of spirit which too often embitters such recollections, and his estimate of things was just and sober. "I believe," he tells Mr. Babington, from whom he had heard an instance of "Perceval's sweetness melting down Whitbread's rough churlishness, and extorting a eulogy for suavity and kindress," "that he is a man of undaunted spirit, but his modesty prevents his taking that high tone, which at such a time as the present rendered Pitt so equal to the emergency."

The mental derangement of the king, and the necessity of making provision for carrying on the government during its continuance, caused great excitement in the political circles in which he largely participated, and his Journal abounds with entries which manifest the anxiety with which he watched the progress of events, as well as with striking comments on the characters, and actions of the most prominent members of parliament.

In the midst of this "bustle" graver entries intervene, and reflections which strikingly illustrate the calm and watchful temper in which he passed through its turmoil. "Lying awake long in the night my thoughts were not naturally so serious as usual, and my mind more disturbed by the rushing in of a great variety of topics. Alas! how much of my life is fumed away in trifles which leave no mark behind, and no fruit! O Lord, enable me to redeem the time better in future; to live more on plan, though really this has been in some degree my object, and to be more devoted in heart and life to Thy glory, and to the good of my fellow-creatures." These were not the indolent desires of occasional feeling;

strict practical rules grew out of them. "Let me try to keep myself reminded of invisible things by something which will call attention, though not produce pain, and by varying the expedients; when I grow familiar with one, I may use another. I did try a little pebble in my shoe. Why should such secondary means be despised? Oh that they were unnecessary, and so they may become by degrees! Oh may I learn to live above this world, and set my affections on things above!"

"Friends dined with me, and stayed too late—and though I brought out books and read passages, it was wasteful work. How foolish that people cannot understand each other better! What good done by this visit? How unprofitable was our intercourse, partly from want of topics ready for conversation! They would often remind me of useful subjects for discussion—yet last night I really was thinking how to do the young man good, but no aspirations—I am quite faulty here." "Dined at the Speaker's—he very kind, and particularly obliging in his public attentions to me. Sat between Bankes and Sir John Sebright—latter a man of much energy in the pursuits he engages in, and many right dispositions, feelings, and opinions—very upright as a member of parliament. I tried to introduce some religious conversation, but I knew not well how. Alas! I was too much admiring and enjoying the splendour, &c. in itself. It is much the handsomest thing of its size I ever saw, and so say others who live in and see the most splendid houses; but how little did I keep my heart with due diligence! how little was I poor in spirit, the mortified, humble, meek servant of the lowly Jesus! Surely I was intoxicated with the glitter and parade, and too much like others. It must be good for me, who am called so much necessarily into social intercourse, to retire when I can to my own home and family, and give up as much as possible dining out—my health is a fair plea for it—it always suffers from late dining, though less I think than formerly."

"Mr. Pinkney sent me a letter which was written to him by the President of the United States, intimating a

disposition to enter into a negotiation with England on Abolition Enforcement questions distinct from others; and Pinkney said that he had never had a convenient opportunity of reading it or showing it to Lord Wellesley, who was out of town all the summer, and he saw his lordship rarely. This looks very ill. Lord! give peace to an afflicted world."

A letter to Lord Muncaster describes his occupation, and shows the cheerfulness he maintained amid it all.

"Near London, April 10, 1811.

"Alas! my dear Muncaster, how little your sanguine hopes of my being by this time at liberty, are verified! To-day, as again to-morrow, I am doomed to that vile and hateful drudgery of presiding in a committee, where a private bill is very hotly contested; and what is worse, contested between those who are all my friends; and what is worst of all, the case is one in which it is very difficult to form a clear judgment. Yet, notwithstanding this difficulty, you would suppose, from the warmth with which the partisans on each side abuse the other, that there was no room for any difference of opinion, but that dishonesty or sheer stupidity, could alone cause any one to hesitate on which side to give his vote. I am now writing on the evening of Saturday the 13th of April, having every day since that on which I wrote the first five lines of my letter been incessantly engrossed, except on the day which was claimed by considerations and feelings peculiar to that season when we commemorate the event on which we depend for all our hopes of future happiness. Alas! I am beginning my recess with so great an arrear of business that I am ready to burn my papers, and *shut up shop*.

You surprise me by your account of the blooming state of your walls, though I was prepared to hear accounts which might seem strange to any one who did not know that the seasons with you are not such as your degree of latitude might lead any one to suppose. But, my dear Muncaster, though you have stayed till all

around you is so beautiful that you can scarcely persuade yourself to quit the loves of the castle; yet come you must, or I shall send the serjeant-at-arms to disturb your privacy; and what is more, you must bring your daughters with you, or they also shall be summoned on some pretence or other to give evidence concerning the practicability of a tunnel through Scawfell to facilitate your communication with Winandermere. We abound with projects this session, and there are some little less extraordinary. I guess how you will rejoice in the late news from Portugal. They really gratify me more than any public news I have heard for many years. Why, it is enough to drive Buonaparte mad. What! L'Enfant gaté flying before Lord Wellington?

I must break off. Nil mihi rescribas, attamen ipse veni. With kind remembrances,

Ever yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

Bring the lasses."

None of this abundant crop of "projects" caused Mr. Wilberforce more trouble than Lord Sidmouth's abortive attempt to regulate the licenses of protestant dissenting teachers. He disliked the whole measure, but feared especially lest, whilst aimed at others, it should cripple the pastoral instructions of the clergy. This fear he early expressed to Mr. Perceval; having, on the 26th March, "opened to him about the North American Indians—the Irish people and system, actual and proper—the English church—the clergy, and the operation of the Conventicle Act; with the benefit derived from religious societies conducted with caution by the minister himself. I told Perceval these effects in Richardson's case and others, and stated to him Richmond's diligence and its effects."

"I was chiefly afraid lest he should stop the private religious meetings of the clergy; and I urged the danger of all who should come under serious impressions, going off in that case to the Methodists, and described the excellence of their discipline."

The Methodists rose against this project as one man; and on the motion for its second reading in the Lords, it was negatived without a division, and with the expressed concurrence of the Lord Primate and the government. Yet out of this business grew one of the most irritating rumours which infest the course of the most simple-minded politician. "Have I told you," he asks Mr. Stephen, "that it is reported and credited, that Lord Sidmouth told the deputation that I had been of his cabinet, and had instigated him to the measure, and had been his counsellor; and that when Thompson told me what Lord Sidmouth had said, I stamped upon the ground and wept, exclaiming, Then Lord Sidmouth has betrayed me—or as some accounts give it, that I was in an agony; but these agree in saying that I exclaimed, Lord Sidmouth has betrayed me! (You see that this implies the most consummate villainy possible.) Yet this is believed of a man whom some of them, at least, must know to have defeated a similar attack, only worse, in 1796 or 7, and who has had nothing to do with the Methodists since, but their being such zealous friends to him in the contest of 1807. By the way, I have not mentioned to Thompson what I doubt about mentioning even to you, (on account of Matt. vi. 3,) but I will—as it bears on my real feelings about the Methodists, (though more about one of their founders,) that from respect to that great and good man, Charles Wesley, I many years ago prevailed on two friends to join in allowing his widow an annuity, which she still receives. I have often, I own, thought it a great reflection on the Methodists, that they suffered such a person to be in real want, as she was, when I undertook her cause.

It is strange that such a report should have gained credit, but so it was; and he heard of "the Sidmouthian declaration to the Methodist deputation of my hostility to them," as "bruited about with natural comments and additions," at Kidderminster, Leeds, and many other places. Though he was by this time pretty well case-hardened, and accustomed to walk with truth "through evil as well as good repute," yet he felt at first "perhaps

too much the personal injustice done" him, "just as a cut gives a sharper pain, than a heavy weight which over-bears you." Yet even then he was chiefly "hurt by this story, because it goes to disparage religion; and though its falsehood may be proved to sensible men, it will leave a cloud behind. Is it," he adds strikingly, "that God, knowing me to be fond of popular favour, means thus graciously to mortify the passion? At least let me try to derive from it this benefit. I ought however to vindicate myself by all fair means."

Many matters of great interest engaged his attention during the remainder of the session. In the closing debate on the 19th of July, he gave utterance to his feelings on the probability of a war with America. "Deeply, sir, do I deplore the gloom which I see spreading over the western horizon; and I most earnestly trust that we are not to be involved in the misfortune of a new war, aggravated by possessing almost the character of civil strife—a war between two nations, who are children of the same family, and brothers in the same inheritance of common liberty." Upon the following day he joined his family at Herstmonceux.

The vacation opened with its usual employments. "Letters my chief business. Writing a long one to-day to Mr. Roberts, vindicating myself against Mr. W.'s charge, and against his own declaration, most kindly and frankly made, of my being too hurrying and immethodical, and thereby lessening my influence."

Nothing could be more characteristic than the history of this correspondence. Mr. Roberts, with whom he had before no particular acquaintance, had called on him in the bustle of the session, by an appointment which had escaped Mr. Wilberforce's recollection. The rest may be told in his own words—"Wrote to Mr. Roberts, from whom I received a most frank and honest letter; too strongly charging me with deceiving people, though ascribing it to my attempting more business than I can execute. I love his frankness, and thanked him for it; yet how hardly am I used! If I do my utmost, yet if I do not succeed, or if delays happen, they are

charged on me ; yet I am not clear of the fault of taking more on me than I can get through, though not intentionally to blame. Of late years I have refused multitudes of things. Let this letter, and what it states of another person, who charged me with deceiving him, speaking fair, but performing nothing, though all this is false . . . yet let it be a lesson to me to avoid all appearance of evil."

Mr. Roberts, though with no such intention, had taken the shortest road to his confidence. "A friend who will frankly tell me of my faults in private," was a possession that he valued above all price. "I must spend what time remains," he says two days afterwards in his private Journal, "in humiliation and prayer ; but let me just put down the record of a most striking letter from Mr. Roberts of Sheffield—the most truly Christian, candid, kind, friendly remonstrance I ever remember ; especially considering the erroneous views of my conduct under which he wrote. I had unhappily forgot an appointment made with him four days before ; and just when raw and fresh from this instance of my negligence, he met at my door a neighbour, who charged me with the most gross misconduct, in making people dance attendance on me, and perhaps, at last, not only deceiving, but even opposing them, &c. Yet he had the firmness and Christian spirit of love to make him not credit this, and to ascribe what ground there was for it to my undertaking more than I could execute."

"I should do violence to my own feelings," he tells Mr. Roberts, "if I did not without delay assure you solemnly, that I greatly respect your frankness on general grounds ; but that still more on personal grounds I consider you as entitled to my warmest gratitude for what I must deem a signal act of friendship. Two of the best friends I have in the world, have endeared themselves to me in no small degree by the same friendly frankness. Amongst other advantages which follow from dealing thus openly, is this, that if a man be not in fault, or not in fault greatly, he has an opportunity of vindicating himself in whole or in part ; or if he be in

fault, he has the opportunity of acknowledging, and as far as possible of repairing it. * * One word for the person whom you met at my door; you will add to the obligations I owe you, if you will tell me who it is, or what the case is on which he applied to me. I can solemnly declare, that for many years I have been particularly on my guard never to excite expectations which I was not sure I could realize; but I must say public men are often used very hardly, and a person in my situation is made answerable for measures he cannot control. I will strictly observe any injunctions of secrecy under which you may lay me; but conscious that I have not meant to deceive, I cannot but be very anxious to exculpate myself, if it be only in your opinion, which I must say I value highly from the specimen you have given me of your character."

Mr. Roberts's reply enabled him fully to refute this charge. "Another most kind and Christian letter," is his memorandum of it. "N. was the man who gave him that account of me. How curious! Never had any man more reason to complain of another than I of him; and because I kept back all my complaints, he goes about abusing me, and even such a man as Roberts is the dupe of his account. Yet I am not clear that it is not more stupidity than intentional roguery." His correspondent's frankness deserved, he thought, a fuller explanation of the truth. "It is really extraordinary," he tells him in an early letter, "but I find myself opening to you with all the unreservedness of an old friend, and entering with the same confidence of friendly sympathy into my private circumstances and feelings. Frankness begets frankness. My temper is naturally, I believe, open, and you have been so kindly unreserved to me, that in return I open the window of my bosom, you will remember the allusion, as soon as with my mind's eye I see you ready to look into it."

As soon therefore as the leisure of his holidays allowed, he replied at length to Mr. Roberts, entering naturally into a detailed sketch of his whole life in parliament.

“ Herstmonceux, near Battel, July 29, 1811.

“ My dear Sir,

The strong claim on my esteem and gratitude which you established by your first letter is much augmented and confirmed by your last. I speak the real sentiments of my heart, when you hear that I feel deeply indebted to you. How much do I wish that you had been long ere now in the habit of occasionally addressing me in the same style of friendly, and I will add, Christian, animadversion, and also, when needed, of reproof! Such communications are unspeakably valuable to any public man, who wishes, on the one hand, to do his duty, and who, on the other, is sufficiently aware of the difficulty of his task, and of his own various imperfections.

I am sorry I have not as much time at my command as I should be glad to employ in considering your letter, before I reply to it. But weeks might be spent, neither idly nor unprofitably, in discussing topics of such importance and extent. Before I enter on them, let me assure you, that your last letter, by informing me that it was N. to whom you had alluded, has afforded material relief to my mind. For, though I was conscious that I had never intentionally trifled with or deceived any one with whom I had business to transact, yet I was but too well convinced that from inadvertency or forgetfulness, arising from the multiplicity of my occupations and engagements, I had occasionally been justly culpable; (how could I be otherwise than impressed with the consciousness of this, when engaged in writing to you, in whose case such a circumstance had arisen!) and I could not foresee into what extent of apparent criminality I might not have been drawn by the same causes. By informing me, that — and — were the person and case in question, you therefore, I repeat it, considerably relieved me.

* * * *

I have spent so much time on the former part of your last letter, that the latter and more interesting part must be despatched more briefly; and I will be honest enough to begin by confessing that I wish I could vindicate myself as satisfactorily, even to my own judgment, against

the general charge, which you urge so kindly, and therefore with increased force, of a want of order and method in the general discharge of my business, and I cannot deny the consequences which you ascribe to these imperfections. I strive, and will strive still more earnestly, against them. But let it not be supposed that after this frank confession, I am seeking covertly to do away the effect of it, when I go on to remark, that though conscience compels me to plead to the indictment, there is much to be alleged in extenuation, much in explanation of my offence. And before I proceed to state these particulars, let me bar any conclusions in this case, to be drawn from the last session of parliament only; because the truth is, that about ten months ago I lost my secretary, and hence my papers have been in confusion, my letters have been unanswered, and I have been forced to spend time in writing with my own hand many which ought to have been written by my secretary, with a gain to me of the time for better purposes.— But you will easily suggest to yourself, how such a cause must diffuse its effects throughout the whole of my day, and of my work. In the next place I ought perhaps to mention my not having any great share of bodily strength, were it not that though this prevents my being able occasionally to work double tides, and so get through a great quantity of work in a few days on any emergency, yet my constitution has been such as to enable me, I believe, to get through on the whole as much business during six or seven months as many far stronger persons; the inability to bear great fatigue does, however, sometimes cause my affairs, papers, letters, &c. to fall into confusion, because I cannot, after having been kept up till four or five in the morning, rise at my usual hour, and pass my time according to its ordinary system of allotments. Conscious also of this, I dare not make engagements for an early or even moderate hour in the ensuing morning, because I cannot foresee how long I may be kept up on the preceding night. This leads me to remark in the next place, that in the case of a member of parliament, it is not merely the quantity of work

which he has on his hands, but the uncertain hours he must keep, which prevents his having the full command of his time.

And now in going on with this explanation, I find myself embarrassed by the fear of subjecting myself to the imputation of vanity and self-sufficiency, if I proceed to state particulars, which it would yet be unjust to myself to forbear mentioning. But if the great apostle of the Gentiles, when his character was called in question, felt that he was justified in speaking of his own actings and sufferings in the cause of Christ, in a manner which but for the occasion would have rendered him liable to the charge of boasting and vain glory, I may surely, at least to your friendly ear, state concerning myself particulars which, but for the circumstance which calls them from me, ought not to proceed from my own pen. With this excuse then let me state to you, that there is scarcely any member of parliament who has much, or I might almost say any private business, who attends the discussions on public questions with any thing like the same degree of regularity as myself, or who takes part so much in them. Again, there is scarcely any such member who is so generally put on the public committees, which from time to time are appointed for the despatch of important business, for conducting delicate and important inquiries, &c. Observe, I do not put myself on these committees, but bearing in mind that I am member for Yorkshire, I own I think it right that I should be present at the agitation of all public questions of moment, and for the same reason, that I should not shrink from the attendance on committees. The number of these to which I belonged during the last session was very great. Let me also state that you can scarcely conceive the prodigious amount of inconvenience which I sustain from not thinking it right to allow my servants to say, when I am within, that I am not at home, but only that I am engaged. . . . I will just state, that my scrupulousness here is not on my own account so much as on my servants; it has been a matter of so much importance to me, as to have made me observe the effect

on their minds of saying, Not at home ; and I see that nine out of ten of them conceive that they are telling a falsehood for their master's convenience. How then can I afterwards speak in Scriptural terms of the guilt of lying ; and will they not be likely to infer, that if they are allowed to stretch a little when it is for their master's benefit, they may do the same for their own ? . . But the inconvenience which I suffer from it is extreme. For my servants assure me, that in spite of all they can say, of my being engaged, of my not seeing persons unless they come by appointment, (Yorkshire men however are excepted from this rule,) people will force their way in, and then you may conceive the consequence. Indeed I believe you have in some degree witnessed it ; I say in some degree, because I doubt whether I had the pleasure of seeing you at Kensington Gore, and if not, you can little conceive how difficult it is for me to force my way out of my own house. But though I own I might do better, and hope to do better than I have done, the above causes, with the additional circumstance of the grand evil of all, my very great correspondence, render it extremely difficult, if not impossible, to allot certain hours to certain occupations, in the degree which you perhaps suppose. There is however still another consideration to take into account, and a consideration of as much practical importance and operation as any that has been mentioned, and that is, my not being a party man,

Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri,

which surely the member for Yorkshire ought not to be ; for as I have no such easy principle to decide my vote, in nine cases out of ten at least, as that of the side of the House from which the motion proceeds, but profess to take my part on every question according to my own unbiassed judgment, much reading is necessary, much reflection, much talking matters over with able and impartial friends, when facts are brought forward, concessions, made, &c., which do not appear in public debates. The questions on which we have to decide are often, be-

lieve me, of great nicety ; on which, if a man will give a fair hearing to all that is to be urged on both sides, he will own it is very hard to judge which of the two scales preponderates. I must add, by the way, that you are not to estimate the attention I pay, nay, the share I take, in public debates and conversations, by what you see in the newspapers ; for belonging to no party, I am naturally, as well as on other accounts, very unpopular with the reporters, who are always strong on one side or the other. Hence I am often left entirely out, and more frequently dismissed with a much shorter account of what I have said, than is given of what comes from other speakers. . . . The evil of which I am here speaking, if it affected myself only, would scarcely deserve to be noticed ; but considered in its general operation, as it tends to aggravate party violence, to produce a disposition to cultivate the favour of the reporters, instances of which I have seen in men who might have been supposed incapable of such servility, to destroy in short all independence of principle and character,—viewed in these and other consequences, the evils arising from the partial and unfair way in which our debates are now reported, and more especially in which any neutral, particularly if he is supposed to be unreasonably religious, is treated, are of the very first importance, and tend as I really fear to the ruin of our country.

But I have been led away, though not unnaturally, into this general discussion. I will finish this train of egotisms, of which I really am heartily ashamed, by stating that my irregularity does not proceed from my having less time to give to parliamentary business from social engagements, domestic comforts, other occupations, &c. for I make all other business bend and give way to that of parliament. I refuse all invitations for days on which the House sits. I commonly attend all the debate, instead of going away after the private business is over for two or three hours, and coming down again after a comfortable dinner ; on the contrary, I snatch a hasty meal, as I may, before the public business begins, in the short interval sometimes between the end

of the private and the beginning of the public. I see little or nothing of my family during the session of parliament, (though, blessed be God, of a more tender, excellent wife no man ever received 'the gift from the Lord,' you know the quotation,) and I have stayed till the very end of the session, I believe, every year of the last twenty-three or twenty-four. This very year, I had gone down to my family, when the new business which so unexpectedly sprung up gave a call, to which I did not turn a deaf ear. Now, my dear sir, once more I assure you, I am ashamed of myself for running on thus.

But that which I account the part of my public conduct in which I have acted the most faithfully by my constituents, and in a manner the most becoming the member for the first county in England, is my not having rendered the situation the means of benefiting my relatives . . of whom I have had several with large families reduced from great affluence to entire destitution by commercial misfortunes . . or connexions, or friends; nor still more, the means of aggrandizing myself, or my family, or rather, which was the greater temptation to me, of securing a quiet seat in the legislature of my country, exempt from expense, trouble, or risk, and which would have allowed me to attend as much or as little as I liked without impropriety. This, I dare say, has never struck you; but when you consider on the one hand, that more than half of the present House of Lords has been created or gifted with their titles (excluding all hereditary descent) since I came into parliament, and on the other, that my intimacy with Mr. Pitt for so many years may be supposed to have rendered it not difficult for me to obtain such an elevation, you may assign more weight to this circumstance, than at first sight might appear to you to be due to it. I remember Mr. Cobbett commenting on this subject with his usual fairness observed, that my pride was more gratified by being M. P. for Yorkshire, than by receiving a peerage from any minister; and I will not deny all force to the remark; but I can assure him, that this pride would

never have had the effect of preventing my accepting a seat in the House of Lords—they were principles of a very different and far higher order which produced that operation.

And thus for the first, and let me hope for the last time, finding myself in a rural retirement at a friend's house, where I could scribble on with little interruption, I have suffered myself by your friendly expostulation to be drawn into this exposure of the real sentiments of my heart, respecting my parliamentary conduct. But after all I have been led into saying in my own favour, I ought in fairness to add, that I am myself conscious of many, many imperfections, and defects, and errors; of more perhaps than are known by any other person; though I can truly declare that they have not been caused by my sacrificing a sense of public duty to my own personal advantage, or, I will add, personal gratification. I will also confess my fear lest from the infirmities of age beginning to appear, (for though I am not quite fifty-two, a man's age is not to be always measured by the number of his years,) there have been more imperfections within the last year or two than formerly—the memory first declines, and in my intercourse with you there was a notable instance of its being defective. Let me not forget to assure you that I consider myself, in all that I have been saying, not so much defending myself against the accusation you brought against me, as against that which I brought against myself—that to which I was conscious I must appear justly subject, in the judgment of fair and unprejudiced observers. I should not, however, though I have been so insensibly drawn on into pouring forth the unrestrained effusions of my heart as they have flowed forth without preparation or arrangement, I should not, I think, send off such a mass of egotisms, (as I must again style what I have been writing,) if the friendly frankness with which you addressed me, had not made me feel that I could open to you the whole interior of my mind. Once more I thank you from the bottom of my soul for the friendly

and Christian freedom which you have exercised towards me.

The postman is come. He departs hence, most inconveniently for me, at a very early hour: and to save a day I will send off this letter without reading it over;—it will at least show, that I wish to stand well in your estimation,—you have in fact convinced me, that you form your judgment of men with an observing, and at the same time a candid eye. But after all, it is of little real importance what judgment is formed of us by our fellow-creatures. To obtain the approbation of the man within the breast, as conscience has been well called, should be our object, and to seek for that true honour which cometh from God. Believe me, with real esteem and regard, my dear sir,

Your obliged and faithful,
W. WILBERFORCE.”

CHAPTER IV.

Proposes retiring from representation of Yorkshire—Bible Society—Feeling toward America—Death of Mr. Perceval—Retires from representation of Yorkshire.

THE alarming illness of the King called him at this time to an immediate decision upon a most important question, suggested to him by that consciousness of failing memory which he expresses in this letter, as well as by the earnest advice of some of his most confidential friends. “I am thinking just now whether or not to give up the county of York: it is a most serious question, may God direct me right in it. I can truly say, that if I knew which was the right path, I would follow it.”

His great humility disposed him, as has been already said, to defer too much to the judgment of his friends;

yet this was more perhaps in appearance than in truth. It led him indeed to seek their counsel with unusual freedom, and to weigh it with proportionate anxiety, and thus sometimes gave to a suspended judgment the appearance of a want of resolution; but on all important points he at last acted on his own convictions. Yet whilst forming his own judgment he was often "much embarrassed by the conflicting advice of friends—Babington strong for absolute retiring—Stephen and others for giving up Yorkshire—but Grant and Henry Thornton against my quitting the county."

This important question was far from occupying all his time. He complains indeed of being robbed of his usual holiday leisure for literary enjoyment. But of more serious work, as he tells Mr. Babington, his hands were full; and in no vacation did he find, "as Dr. Johnson phrases it, a more plentiful lack of time."

He reached home upon the 6th of September, and felt his "mind affected by having all around me on my first return home, but somewhat turmoiled from the consciousness of the number of people I had to see and things to do." Here he spent a busy fortnight, pressing forward by continual personal exertion his West Indian efforts, and consulting with his natural advisers on his own doubtful question. He was gradually adopting his ultimate decision. "It seems best to quit the larger sphere, and yet remain at least for awhile in parliament, at the beginning of a new reign, when one knows not what may be intended in favour of popery, or against morals." "I think I am pretty well resolved against Yorkshire, which I humbly hope is pleasing to God. I am sure it is not from the love of ease or quiet. I feel exquisitely the giving up all my old ways and habits, and still more, I humbly hope, the becoming unable to render any public services such as those in which I now am engaged. Still God can find instruments. He seems to have prepared a new employment and new pleasures for me, and I humbly hope that I shall also know Him better and love Him more. O Lord, bless, and keep, and guide me!"

Meanwhile he was full of business, "several important matters having been stored up to meet me. Several missionary concerns. With Lord Liverpool, Lord N. and others. Heard with pleasure from Lord N. that justice would be secured for the Hottentots. He bore strong testimony to the effects of the Moravian missions—less to those of the Methodists—said Vanderkempt and Kichener worthy men, but enthusiasts. Alas! poor Lord N., how little dost thou judge according to the Scripture's estimate! Was not then St. Paul an enthusiast?"

The next two months were spent by Mr. Wilberforce in paying, with his family, some long-promised visits. Signs of thankfulness to God, and love to man, mark every halt along his route. "Elmdon, Sunday, Sept. 29. Walked a little with Cowper—the beautiful end of the 6th book—"the promised Sabbath." What a prospect! Oh the unspeakable mercies of God; what can I desire which he has not granted me? And then when I compare my state with that of all the rest of the world, in other countries, and even in this little oasis of security, and prosperity, and peace! Oh that I were more grateful! Oh let me strive more to love God and Christ, to delight in them, and be grateful to them in some proportion to what I ought," "Oct. 28th. Off for Lord G.'s, were very kindly received. It is a fine place, and improved with great taste. Their kind compulsion kept us over another day. Lord G. very pleasing and friendly, but these fine houses do not suit me. Surely they see too little of their children. Alas! I fear I did little good. Resolved to take opportunity from a conversation we had at N. to write to Lord G. to press on him the reading of St. Paul's writings. Oh may the effect be blessed! He is of a sweet disposition, and most superior understanding. Alas! how unspeakable are his disadvantages, and how much does he suffer from high life! How thankful should I be for having a wife who is not of the fashionable sort! How thankful for my not having been made a peer in earlier life! It would, humanly speaking, have been the ruin of my children, if not of myself." "Finishing in the evening a letter of Alexander Knox's,

of fine imagination, rich in thought and beautiful in language; ingenious too, and devotional, but yet fanciful, and full of guesses and subtleties leading to dangerous practical errors, or rather perhaps arising out of them, and then lending their filial support."

By the end of November he was again at home.

A few extracts from letters written at this time to Mr. Simeon exhibit some of those secret links by which all through his long public life he was connected with the efforts of religious men in every quarter. Mr. Simeon was anxious to set up in Cambridge an Association of the Bible Society, and he at once appealed to Mr. Wilberforce for help. In reply he promises "to do his best," and after many efforts to promote the object writes as follows—thus manifesting his deep interest in the progress of this noble institution.

"Near London, Dec. 10. 1811.

"My dear Sir,

Io triumphe! or rather let me more properly praise God for the greatly altered view of things. When all my prospects were dark and gloomy, behold the light suddenly breaks forth. Who should be announced to me this morning, but the Duke of Gloucester, who, with a cheerful countenance accosted me by saying, that he had come himself to let me know that though on the whole he still thought that it would not be proper for him to attend in person, he had written to desire that it might be stated to the meeting that he highly approved of it, and took a lively interest in the Society's success; that he desired to be put down as a subscriber of 50 guineas; and that if there should be a request made to him to become President or Patron of the Society, he should not decline the situation. The Duke suggested, that if the Bishop of Bristol, from delicacy towards his brother of Ely, should not like to attend, Lord Hardwicke would be the fittest person to represent and speak for him at the meeting. The Dean has not absolutely decided, but

I think he will go. I press him to go down as strongly as with propriety I can.

With kind remembrances to common friends,
Believe me ever sincerely yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

The day following the meeting, its success was thus communicated to him in a letter from the Bishop of Bristol.

"Trinity Lodge, Dec. 13, 1811.

"My dear Sir,

Were I ever inclined to think lightly of the character and merits of the British and Foreign Bible Society, your opinion of it would convince me that I could not be wrong in lending my humble assistance to that which has deserved the support of the friend of every thing which is right, humane and good. Unfortunately, for reasons I will explain when we meet, I could not attend the meeting. But our great and admirable friend, the Dean of Carlisle, who is himself *instar omnium*, did; and there exercised his extraordinary powers to the credit of himself and the furtherance of this most important cause, which I have the happiness to say was well planted, and is likely to be most thriving. I have the honour to be, with the sincerest regard, my dear sir,

Yours most obediently,
W. BRISTOL."

The Christmas holidays had now brought his two school-boys home, and all his six children were gathered round him—"A true family party," but "how sadly do I feel my own exceeding incompetency to the work of education! O Lord, to Thee do I flee. Thou hast promised wisdom to them that ask it sincerely; grant it then to me, that I may be kind and cheerful, and yet steady with my young ones." He was at this time labouring under a distressing oppression on the chest which for some weeks almost deprived him of his voice. Yet was he striving to make their home cheerful to his children. "It is of great importance to preserve boys' affections, and prevent their thinking home a dull place."

"R.'s birth-day, so they had their play of King and Queen in my court dresses—in the evening chess. Evening, air-pump, and Southey's *Curse of Kehama*—imagination wild as the winds—prodigious command of language, and the moral purity truly sublime—the finest ideas all taken from the Scriptures." "Oh what a consideration is it, that magnificent as are the visions of glory in which Southey's fancy revels, and which his creative genius forms, they are all beneath the simple reality of the Christian's hope, if he be but duly impressed with it! May the eyes of my understanding be enlightened, that I may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of his glorious inheritance. Amen."

On Saturday "William Allen the Quaker dined with us by three; and soon after dinner, till half-past eight, showed us galvanic and chemical wonders." "How truly edifying," he continues in that tone of hearty praise which sprung ever readily from his habitual humility, "to see such a man's goings-on! Though so attached to science, in a large business, and so busy at Lancaster's schools, lecturing at Guy's publicly—he attends all charitable meetings where needed, and assigned as a reason why he could not attend us on Monday, that he must be at the meeting for distributing soup at Spital Fields from six to nine. Thus can he contract into the smallest dimensions, or expand into the largest, for beneficent purposes."

The new year opened with his usual song of praise. "Oh what mercies have I to acknowledge during the past year! Surely it is a solemn season, but I go to prayer; only let me put down my gratitude and humiliation. I must especially try to husband time more. O Lord, enable me to redeem it! I must try to keep an account of time and work, to take security against trifling." "I have been detained long at church," he tells Dr. Coulthurst, "according to a custom which I have observed for twenty-six or twenty-seven years, of devoting the new year to God by public worship in a sacrament on the 1st of January—but you shall hear from

me to-morrow; and at this season, when it is usual for friends to interchange good wishes, accept the assurance of my best remembrances and kindest wishes for yourself and all that are dear to you for time and for eternity."

The approaching crisis with America filled him with uneasiness. "There seems real reason to fear a war with America, yet honest Butterworth's correspondents say that we need not heed the war cry, as being only meant to intimidate. It may be so; but nine times out of ten it is a game at brag, wherein each party depends upon the giving way of the other, or would not himself push on so warmly. Alas, alas! Feb. 3d. Bankes thinks with me that there is no chance of the Prince's changing the ministry, or consequently of a speedy dissolution, but we both fear an American war. I am wanting my voice much, that I may plead the cause of Christianity in India, and soften the asperity of hostile tempers between Great Britain and America." "I am so much affected," he tells Mr. Babington, "by the probability of a war with America, that I am strongly disposed to go to the House if Whitbread brings on this motion,* that I may declare the grief and pain with which the very thought of a war with America fills my heart. I have often thought that we have not enough borne in mind that the people of America have a great influence over their government, and that their thinking that a great number of people in this country feel for them might tend to allay irritation, even if a war should break out." Mr. Whitbread's motion came on upon the 12th of February, and after "thinking a little about American question in the morning—he went down to the House for the first time this session. People kindly welcomed me—I spoke for about twenty minutes without suffering in voice, and very well heard. Whitbread angry at me for voting and speaking against him, and very rough and rude. He seemed himself to think so, for he came up next day and talked with me some time, saying how

* For the correspondence between the two governments.

much he had been disappointed by my going against him. Yet all our set voted with me—much misrepresented in the *Morning Chronicle* next day. I went against my wife's remonstrance, to soften and prevent irritation."

To his friends in the country he thus explains the motives of his conduct.

TO S. ROBERTS, ESQ.

"Near London, Feb. 15, 1812.

"My dear Sir,

My complaint has been much more serious, and has hung on me far longer than I expected. I thank God, I am convalescent I hope, though not well. But on Thursday last, the great anxiety I felt, and indeed continue to feel, on the American question, carried me to the House of Commons much sooner than perhaps was prudent: and really I have been as usual so misrepresented, and traduced in the newspaper reports of the debates, that I almost regret my not having stayed away. It is a satisfaction to me, however, to reflect, that I went for the purpose of soothing any irritation which might arise, and of preventing any mischievous discussions. I have not time to be at all particular, but I can assure you, had Whitbread's motion been complied with, and the various particulars mentioned in the correspondence between the British and American ministers come into discussion, the most acrimonious debates and the strongest charges (and I must say, well-founded charges in some instances) against the American government, and its representative, General Armstrong, must have come forward.

Again, I fear there is too much cause for apprehending, that the American government, finding its threatening language produce the effect of making our parliament take the negotiation into its own hands, would conceive that it need only go on threatening with increased warmth, to insure our conceding all it should require; whereas, I know it would thereby call forth a spirit of a directly opposite kind in many of our country gentlemen, as well

as in government, and would consequently produce the rupture which I so greatly deprecate. But I must say farewell; and believe me, with esteem and regard, my dear sir,

Yours sincerely,
W. WILBERFORCE."

The other great cause which he "wanted voice to plead," and which eighteen years before he had pressed so earnestly on parliament, was brought on at this time by the approaching expiration of the East India Company's charter. He was most anxious that the Church should assume her proper station in this noble undertaking, of diffusing the blessings of Christianity, and was therefore "trying to keep back the Dissenters and Methodists, until the Church fairly come forward, from fear that if the sectaries begin the Church will not follow. I wish them therefore to delay applying to the legislature, for instructing the East Indians, or for the repeal of the Conventicle Act, which they are about to attempt in consequence of the judgment of the King's Bench that a man must be a teacher of a separate congregation."

He was himself endeavouring to arouse the Church; "setting hard to work on a paper for the Christian Observer, urging clergymen to come forward and press the communication of Christian light to the natives of India;" and using freely in all directions his own personal influence.

He called on Mr. Perceval "entirely about the East India charter occasion, for securing the means of introducing Christian light into India. He freely professed himself favourable to the object, but saw great difficulties in the way, and asked for some distinct proposition. I had told Grant he would. I replied by saying that at least parliament might in the act insert some such general declarations of principles, as in the two resolutions I moved in May, 1793, and carried in the Committee and House, but which Lord Melville would not put into the bill. But more—that we must secure the entrance

of missionaries. To whom can any discretionary power of granting or refusing leave to go be trusted? I must think over this most important point, but I have long conceived that probably those who are interested for religion will be compelled to join the great body of commercial and political economy men, who will, I doubt not, contend for destroying the monopoly of the Company, and leaving the road to the East Indies free and open;" "and I cannot doubt that the most mature consideration will only confirm the present inclination of my mind, to throw open the whole, and even abolish the East India Company altogether, rather than not insure a passage for the entrance of light, and truth, and moral improvement, and happiness into that benighted and degraded region."

"I am sadly disappointed," he says a week later, "in finding even religious people so cold about the East Indian Instruction. Partly produced I think by the sectaries having had a notion that the Church of England to be established. Alas! alas! let us have some substance before we differ about form."

He laboured with his wonted self-devotion and diligence in the House of Commons as well as in the diffusion of information among his friends, calculated to arouse their interest in this most glorious cause, until he saw it triumph over the opposition of ignorance and prejudice.

Public affairs meanwhile were of a highly interesting character. He had foreseen the operation of the Orders in Council, and dreaded the result. So much indeed, that in defiance of the opposition of his medical advisers and friends he had attended at the House when his health was in a most precarious condition, in the hope of averting so unnatural a war, and when it could no longer be averted he says, "Sick at heart from sad prospect of war with America."

He was now leading his usual London life; constant in the House, full of all plans for public or private charity, and showing to others no symptom of the decay which he suspected in himself. One "day at home

writing and correcting a paper about Danish confiscation;" then "to Rose at the Council Office with Latrobe about the Moravian missionaries in Greenland," or "all the afternoon busy about setting up a dispensary for our neighbourhood," and "waiting on the Duke of York to ask him to be patron of it. He very obliging and civil, and consented"—an amiable trait in his Royal Highness towards a conscientious opponent, which he always loved to mention. In the House he spoke more than once upon the system of punishments in the army, "enforcing my argument that no flogging but by general court martial."

He still maintained a jealous watch over the African Slave Trade, and neglected no opportunity to promote its abolition by foreign-powers.

Another cause to which he freely gave his time and thoughts, was the welfare of the different religious societies. Most of them he had seen arise around him since his entrance into public life; for they owed their origin to the increased attention to religion, which was in great measure the fruit of his exertions. When he was most occupied this spring, he still found time to attend the "general meeting of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East. A grand assemblage—I spoke with acceptance. It went off well." African and Asiatic Society's dinner—took the chair. Then House, where sat late. May 6th. British and Foreign Bible Society, annual meeting—all went off admirably. Immense meeting—I spoke with acceptance—several bishops present."

The meeting of the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge led to some important consequences. To the committee then appointed Mr. Wilberforce transmitted Dr. Buchanan's sketch for an ecclesiastical establishment in India, which they embodied in their resolutions; and thus the first great steps were taken which led to the appointment of our Indian bishoprics.

In the midst of these peaceful occupations he was startled by a shock which was felt throughout the kingdom. On Monday, May 11th, some friends had been

breakfasting with him to talk over the East Indian question, and then "considering the question of sinecures preparatory to the third reading of Bankes's Bill for their abolition. Late in town. Stopped to dine at Babington's at half-past four. Babington (who was chairman of the committee on the Orders in Council) at the examination, which began at four, when he returned to us (Henry Thornton, Mrs. Babington, &c.) about a quarter to five, greatly agitated, stating that Perceval had been shot dead in the lobby. We could scarce believe it. I went, after calling at Perceval's and Arbuthnot's, who quite overwhelmed, to the House, to the prison rooms, where the poor wretch Bellingham [was, they were] examining him. I carefully perused his face for some time, close to him—a striking face: at times he shed tears, or had shed them; but strikingly composed and mild, though haggard. Called William Smith's, who close to Perceval when he dropped, and who thought it was myself, till he looked in the face. Smith, with another, carried him into the secretary's room. Poor Lord Arden quite wild with grief—"No, I know he is not here, he is gone to a better world." The next day he went "early to town to the Speaker's, by whom summoned about the proposition to be made for the provision for poor Perceval's family."

"Perceval," he says in his private Diary, "had the sweetest of all possible tempers, and was one of the most conscientious men I ever knew; the most instinctively obedient to the dictates of conscience, the least disposed to give pain to others, the most charitable and truly kind and generous creature I ever knew. He offered me at once a thousand pounds for paying Pitt's debts, though not originally brought forward by Pitt, and going out of office with a great family." "Oh wonderful power of Christianity," he adds upon the following Sunday. "Never can it have been seen, since our Saviour prayed for His murderers, in a more lovely form than in the conduct and emotions it has produced in several on the occasion of poor dear Perceval's death. Stephen, who had at first been so much over-

come by the stroke, had been this morning, I found, praying for the wretched murderer, and thinking that his being known to be a friend of Perceval's might affect him, he went and devoted himself to trying to bring him to repentance. He found honest Butterworth trying to get admittance, and obtained it for him and Mr. Daniel Wilson, whom at my recommendation he had brought with him. The poor creature was much affected, and very humble and thankful, but spoke of himself as unfortunate rather than guilty, and said it was a necessary thing—strange perversion—no malice against Perceval. Poor Mrs. Perceval after the first grew very moderate and resigned, and with all her children knelt down by the body, and prayed for them and for the murderer's forgiveness. Oh wonderful power of Christianity! Is this the same person who could not bear to have him opposed by any one?"

To Mr. Hey he opened at this time his mind.

"London, May 15th, 1812.

"My dear Sir,

Alas! into what times are we thrown! I cannot help thinking I see the source of that savage spirit which prevails so much. The reverence for authority, and law, and rank, and high station, has been effaced from the minds of the lower orders; and where the fear of God has no place, the consequence is that all control is withdrawn from the bad passions of men. To this cause I think may be added the modern system of making expediency the basis of morals and the spring of action, instead of the domestic and social affections and the relations of life and the duties arising out of them. Not that the lower orders understand this generalizing abstract way of thinking and feeling; but the opinions and emotions which are taught and imbibed in this school, receiving their stamp in the mint of the higher orders, if I may so express it, obtain a currency throughout the inferior classes of society. I trust we are introducing the true remedy, indeed, the only remedy of our diseased nature, by teaching the mass of our people the know-

ledge of the Scriptures. Surely it is an indication of the favour of the Almighty, that we have been enabled to spread so extensively the system of education. I must also ascribe much to the seditious publications which have been circulated so industriously.

It is no small pleasure to me to believe that Mr. Perceval had an habitual desire to please God ; and I doubt not he looked to Him with unfeigned humiliation, through the Redeemer. It is really an honour to our House, that his private virtues were so generally recognised among us. How much I wish that I may not hear that in our county the account of Mr. P.'s death, and of the horrid circumstances which attended it, was received with joy and exultation, as in Nottingham, Leicester, and I fear other places ! Well, my dear Sir, 'there remaineth a rest,' and pray for me and mine, that we may enter into it after the short voyage of this stormy and tempestuous life. With kind remembrances to all your family,

I remain, my dear Sir,

Ever your sincere friend,

W. WILBERFORCE."

In the midst of all the public bustle and political contention which followed the death of Mr. Perceval, growing out of the difficulty the Prince Regent experienced in forming a ministry, about which he was consulted by Mr. Canning on the course it was best for him to pursue, it is most refreshing to turn from the entries of his busy nights and hurried days to the record of his inner feelings. He was now again separated from his family, and his letters to them breathe the simplest and most natural affection. The troubled gusts of politics never ruffled its peaceful current. "I feel," he tells his sister, "as if I were unkind in never writing to you, and I have often thought of doing it. But every day brings with it claims upon my time far beyond my powers of satisfying them. Yet nothing can ever prevent my having at liberty for your use my kindest thoughts and affections."

"For once," he tells Mrs. Wilberforce, who was travelling with his children to the coast, "I rejoice in an

east wind, since I recollect that it will meet you and prevent your all suffering from the heat . . . In comes John Villiers, and he has released me only by my absolutely forcing him out at half-past three, and I ought to have gone to town an hour ago . . . I have been sitting under the trees reading and writing. The only part of the garden which I did not enjoy, was one to which I went purposely to see how all looked—the children's gardens. Even the fullest exuberance of summer beauties could not supply the want of animal life. Barbara's gum-cistus is in high beauty, and the roses in full bloom. My own room produces something of the same melancholy sensation as the children's gardens; but I am going to dine at Babington's to meet Mr. Robert Hall, (the Dissenting minister,) whose shyness is such that he could not bring himself to come to me, though, hearing that he wished to see me, I wrote to him a long letter to banish all such feelings, and settle about our meeting."

On the Sunday following he writes again from Broomfield, where he was passing one day with Mr. William Hoare. "After having dated my letter I need not inform you that the various rooms of this house, and walks of this place, call up many interesting recollections in which you all have the principal share. It was impossible for the main features of the place to be ever changed. The walk under the oaks and the opposite close one—the various rooms, &c. . . I hope I do not look back on the past scenes without some of that gratitude which they justly claim in overflowing measure. I am but poorly to day, and have been robbed of the portion of time which I value more in common than any other in the whole week, that I mean which elapses between returning from church and dinner."

His affections were naturally lively, but it was not to this only that he owed the preservation, all through his busy life, of their early morning freshness. This was the reward of self-discipline and watchfulness; of that high value for the house of God, and the hours of secret meditation, which made his Sundays cool down his mind and allay the rising fever of political excitement. Sun-

day turned all his feelings into a new channel. His letters were put aside, and all thoughts of business banished. To the closest observer of his private hours he seemed throughout the day as free from all the feelings of a politician, as if he had never mixed in the busy scenes of public life. "I have been much affected by hearing old Scott of the Lock for the first time these many years. The beginning of his sermon . . . 'I have been young, and now am old' . . . that twenty-seven years ago he preached for the first time in that chapel, was remarkably applicable to me; for then I first heard him at the beginning of my Christian course. Oh how truly may I say, that goodness and mercy follow me! And may I not hope that my being thus humiliated is a sign that the Saviour is knocking at the door of my heart, and that I am ready to let Him in? Mr. Sargent preached, and pleased us all greatly—simple seriousness, and consequent pathos, the character of his preaching."

"What a blessing," he says, "is a cheerful temper! I felt most keenly ——'s behaviour about Bowdler, and his not coming to me; but for his sake, and I hope from Christian principles, I resolved to struggle against bad temper about it, and now all is over." Thus was his spirit kept unruffled by all the exasperating influences of the life he led; whilst he walked safely, with a cheerful seriousness and disengaged affections, in the heated and infectious air of public life—in the world, but most truly not of the world—ever remembering the end. "How will all this busy and tumultuous world appear to have been all one great bedlam when we look back on it from a future state!"

The summer was far advanced before Mr. Wilberforce got off from London, "holding it a duty to stay till the last." He reached Sandgate upon the 29th of July, and resumed his usual summer occupations. "My first employment must be writing—to clear away an immense arrear of unanswered letters and unread papers." "Besides the mass of trash, I have letters for Europe, Asia, Africa, and America."

Here he was exposed to few external interruptions,

and was therefore able to devote more time than usual to his children: whilst he indulged in "a little miscellaneous reading. Sometimes parts of the Reviews or poetry, Heber's Palestine, The Lady of the Lake;" and took part in "the general reading of the family—Rollin and Shakspeare. This afternoon in walking I ran over for an hour The Vicar of Wakefield. What an utter ignorance does it indicate of true Christianity! Morality is its main vital principle; yet the story, though strangely unnatural, is beautifully told and inimitably interesting."

To these employments must be added attempts to benefit his temporary neighbours. It was one of his first cares to form an accurate estimate of the moral and religious state of the surrounding population. At Sandgate he found much to regret. "It is grievous," he laments to Mr. Stephen, "to see this place—hot and cold sea baths, library, billiard table, ponies, donkies, every thing but a church, or chapel, or any thing of the kind, though it is a sort of preserve of the Archbishop's. There is not even a Sunday school. We are trying to get something of the kind set on foot." He was almost disqualified by feeble health from personal exertions in visiting the poor; yet what he could he did, even in this way; stopping often in his solitary walks to drop some word of wisdom for those who casually met him . . . "Thursday: walking early, met a boy aged fourteen, John Russell, who cannot read, and utterly ignorant of religion—did not know what would become of us hereafter—may this meeting be for good" . . . while upon those whose circumstances made it possible, he continually pressed the happiness and duty of thus ministering to their wants. "Miss E." he says this spring, "now going on admirably. Her health and spirits improved, and she very active amongst the cottagers, doing them good. A most useful lesson taught by this; that the best course when any one is low-spirited and distressed with anxieties, is to set them to action in doing good to others. Trust thou in the Lord, and be doing good."

But one important subject now pressed for instant decision. Lord Sidmouth had privately informed him that

an immediate dissolution was at hand ; and the time was therefore come, when he must make up his mind to retain or resign the representation of his county. "I shrink," he says, when weighing all the arguments upon the subject, "from absolutely deciding to resign my situation as from annihilation. Yet my judgment commends it more and more ; and it is not annihilation if I stay in the House, though not for Yorkshire. May the Lord guide me aright. The urgent claims of my children upon my thoughts, time, and superintendence, strongly enforce my relinquishment, and are the deciding consideration. My declining health and memory seem improved ; but I ought not to be an occasional attendant on parliament if M. P. for Yorkshire. O Lord, give me wisdom to guide me rightly. I mean to spend a day in religious exercises, and to make this with my children the great objects with God." His decision was soon made, and was announced two days afterwards in the following letter.

TO CHARLES DUNCOMBE, ESQ. DUNCOMBE PARK, YORKSHIRE.

"Sandgate, near Folkstone, Sept. 8, 1812.

"My dear Duncombe,

After much serious consideration, I have at last made up my mind on the important point on which I wrote to you some time ago—I have resolved to resign that high station with which the kind partiality of my Yorkshire friends has so long honoured me, and in which you have yourself so kindly, and actively, and perseveringly contributed to place me. The truth is, that I find I must either continue to allot less time and thought to my family than it justly claims, or that I must cease to be a constant and assiduous member of parliament, which I am sure I ought to be if I undertake so serious and weighty a trust as that of the representative of the county of York.

Yet I will fairly own to you that it is not altogether without difficulty that I have brought myself to form this determination ; but my judgment being clear, and that

after much and long reflection, (for it is more than a year that this plan has been in contemplation,) and my own opinion being confirmed by those of several of my best friends, I ought no longer to hesitate; and having come to a decision, you are the first person to whom I communicate it. The probability of a dissolution of parliament in the ensuing autumn is so strong, that it seemed right for me to make up my mind; and I will own to you that I wish it to appear clear that I am not influenced in my judgment by the fear of an opposition, of which, if I were to offer myself, I am clear there would be no probability. The higher orders are not liable to sudden changes of their opinions in cases of this sort, and I have every reason to believe (some which no one almost knows but myself, but which would be of very powerful operation) that I should be warmly supported by the great body of the clothiers. I hope you will not suspect me of not estimating at their due amount the trouble and expense which another contest would occasion to my supporters; but I own, that if I believed there were in a certain quarter any design to oppose me, that very circumstance would produce in me so strong a disposition to stand my ground, that I should find it very hard work to force myself to retire, if I could do it at all—not, believe me, from personal motives, though I dare not affirm that they would not mix, but because I should no longer think it my duty so to do; for believing that four-fifths at least of the freeholders are friendly to me, I could not bear the idea of a member, be he who he may, being forced upon our great county by the one-fifth of the freeholders, against the sense of the other four parts, merely by the dread of the expense of a contest; which our experience in 1807 proves may be carried on for a sum by no means difficult to be raised in our county, without pressing too heavily on the candidate himself.

But it is in confidence that to your private ear I thus whisper my secret feelings, and as strictly secret I beg you will consider what I have said. Though I have consulted none but very particular friends, I cannot but suspect that there has been some leaky vessel, and that

hence has arisen that abominable report of a compromise between Mr. H. Lascelles and myself, which would have been highly dishonourable to us both, though far more so to me than to him. Several friends however on whose judgments I place great reliance, are so earnest with me not to quit parliament altogether, that I have agreed to accept the very kind offer of a dear friend, and through marriage a near relation, which will probably place me in a seat in which my occasional attendance in the House of Commons will not be inconsistent with other claims. But let this also be strictly *entre nous* at present. I am doubtful as to the proper time of announcing my intended resignation publicly, and shall be glad of your opinion on that head, on which I mean also to consult Creyke and another friend or two. If the dissolution of parliament should seem really likely, or pretty certainly to take place, it might, and I conceive would, become right for me to declare my intention without further loss of time; but if we seem likely to live through another session, the declaration might this year be premature. I cannot conclude without thanking you most cordially for all the kindness which I have experienced from you during my connexion with York; for though I am not vain, or rather foolish enough to ascribe your support to personal motives, which indeed would be a supposition dishonourable to yourself, yet I should be void of all gratitude if its emotions were not called forth by the long course of continued good offices with which you have favoured me. Let me again however earnestly request, that all I have said may be at present considered as strictly confidential.

Let me beg you to present my own and Mrs. W.'s kind remembrances to Lady Charlotte, who, with all the family, I hope is well, and to believe me, my dear D. with real regard,

Yours very sincerely,

W. WILBERFORCE."

His intentions did not long remain a secret. On the 21st, hearing from good authority that parliament was

about to be dissolved, he sent "his resigning advertisement." "I humbly trust that I have done right; but I cannot say that I do not feel a good deal. Surely it is much to quit such a situation with a high character, and with the wishes of friends that I should retain it. I go to prayer. My heart is deceitful, I scarcely know myself what it wishes, still my judgment is for Bramber."

This unexpected announcement was very variously received. Those who had witnessed the amount of labour which his sense of duty had long imposed upon him, and compared it with the powers of his slight frame and tender health, rejoiced in his decision.

His Yorkshire friends, almost to a man, lamented it. "You cannot be ignorant," writes one of them, "that by the nation in general you are looked up to as the advocate of religion amongst the higher orders of society, and particularly in that legislative assembly, of which, happily for this country, you have so long been a conspicuous and efficient member."

The applause which he feared to seem to seek, followed him into his retirement. The county at large on the day of nomination recorded solemnly their judgment of his character in an enthusiastic vote of their unanimous thanks; and his own town of Hull followed with a similar memorial of affection.

In the following fragment of his own dictation, his long and singular connexion with the county is reviewed.

"Surely if I cannot but look back upon the circumstances which attended the first formation of my connexion with the county of York without recognising the traces of providential guidance, neither can I forbear to acknowledge the same gracious favour in my having so long continued in my honourable station. May I not well wonder that in a county accustomed to so much attention from its members, so much that was likely to give offence should be endured in me without the slightest expression of disapprobation. My religious character and habits might alone be expected to produce disgust. My never attending the county races, or even the assizes; my never cultivating the personal acquaintance of

the nobility and gentry (an omission which would have been culpable, but for the expenditure it would have occasioned of time which I wanted for important purposes); my seldom visiting the county, sometimes not going into it for several years together;—all these might fairly have been expected to have alienated from me the good-will of the freeholders; yet it never produced this effect, and I have every reason to believe that I never should have experienced another opposition. But I began to perceive traces of infirmity, which, from considerations alike of duty and prudence, determined me to retire from my dignified station, and to accept the friendly offer of a seat in parliament which would absolve me from the obligation of constant attendance.

“Several of my Yorkshire friends were for the first time dissatisfied with me; and the letters which I received from various quarters were such as could not but be gratifying to any liberal mind. And here I cannot forbear mentioning a trifling anecdote, which is not without importance in the proof it affords that the general course of a public man may be approved by many who may not concur with him in his political opinions. On my way to the House of Commons one day soon after my having exchanged my seat for Yorkshire for the borough of Bramber, I met Mr. Sheridan. After we had exchanged salutations, ‘Do you know,’ said he, ‘that I was near writing to you some little time ago?’ On my asking the occasion of his intended letter, ‘Why,’ said he, ‘I read in the newspaper your farewell Address to the Freeholders of Yorkshire, and though you and I have not much agreed in our votes in the House of Commons, yet I thought the independent part you acted would render your retirement from parliament a public loss. I was about therefore to write to you, to enforce on you the propriety of reconsidering your determination to retire, as I supposed, from public life, when I was informed that you were to come into parliament for Bramber; this information made me lay aside my intention.’”

CHAPTER V.

Parental Character—Rules for Conduct—Owen of Lanark—Roman Catholic Question—East India Missions.

HIS Sandgate retirement was now interrupted by the conclusion of his children's holidays; as he wished himself to place one of his boys with a new tutor in Leicestershire. "On Friday last, he tells Lord Muncaster, "I set out from Sandgate with my two boys, to convey them to their respective places of education.

"I am now writing at the parsonage of Mr. Stephens' eldest son, in one of the most rural villages of Oxfordshire, secured almost to the point of being impregnable by the badness of the roads, but surrounded by beech woods, and truly dulcifying to the mind, as Burke would have said when soured and fretted by the bustle and the business of life." "Yesterday," he tells Mrs. W. from the same place, "I was fully occupied till the evening, when it would have been almost sacrilege and ingratitude not to walk for half an hour at least enjoying one of the finest sun-settings and moon-risings which my eyes ever beheld. Then my dear boys were with me for some time, and we had some serious talk together. But though I was not occupied in writing to you, I was thinking of you all. A lovelier evening for meditating I never remember; and this is one of the finest mornings for meditating that eye ever beheld. We had a very pleasant evening at Harrow, and in the morning the gradual accumulation of visitors at breakfast would have reminded you of Kensington Gore, both as to matter and manner: and the Kensington Gore precedent was completely followed, for we—some of us—retired to have a consultation; but I must break off: I am delaying Stephen and the boys from a stroll in the woods: I will therefore only add a line or two. But I must tell you how delighted I was with Lord Teignmouth, and all that I saw at Harrow. You would also have been gratified

to see how Mrs. Samuel Thornton, always overflowing with benevolence, seemed to enjoy Kensington Gore, especially, she says, the verandah. I do not think I have had so much pleasure a long time as from having been able thus to contribute to the comfort of such kind friends at a time when they needed it. Young Perceval is a sweet young man, and in some of his features and motions so like his father that it was impossible for any one who, like me, had known and valued him, not to be affected by seeing the son. Poor Perceval! You know the boys at Harrow speak publicly once a year, and all the parents and Harrow men attend. Perceval, a week or ten days before he was murdered, had bespoke rooms at the inn that he might give a dinner to some friends and relations who were to hear his son speak Cardinal Wolsey's affecting speech in Henry VIII. 'In the midst of life we are in death.' I commend you to God's protecting care, and to our gracious Saviour's goodness."

This journey is a good illustration of his parental tenderness. "I had resolved," he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce from Leicestershire, "to set my face towards Cambridge this very day; but at length I thought it better, (after a rumination on my pillow when I lay awake against my will thinking of dear —, who lay in a little bed by my side fast asleep, and whom I conceived I was about to leave for *good*,) to return southward. I feel so nervous about leaving him, that but for shame I think I should bring him back again." "After having prayed with —, and had a tête-à-tête with Mrs. —, I set off for Leicester. Poor dear boy, he was much affected at parting with me, turning round and bursting into tears, first quietly, and afterwards with sobs. I was near crying too as I said to Mrs. —, 'I must get off, or else—' but she I trust will watch over him with Christian care."

Another incident on this journey must stand in his own words. "I am much grieved at having yesterday passed by, without stopping, a man in a ditch by the road-side between Barnet and London, whom two or

three gentlemen were attending to. The Leeds coach with the back seats empty was just behind, and multitudes of passengers, so that help could not be wanted; yet it was wrong in all respects to pass by. It is an adjudged case since the good Samaritan parable—at which I should have been instinctively prompt. It was not hardness of heart I believe either. I was busy hearing Bowdler's paper upon Dugald Stewart, and I was flurried by the Leeds coach, on the outside of which were people who I thought knew me; yet if so it was worse—not glorifying God, &c. Lord, forgive me, forgive me! I felt (and now condemn it) more, that to-day is the anniversary (Oct. 25th) of my escape from drowning in the Avon, by a most providential suggestion." So little had thirty-two years of public life hardened his affections, or blunted a most tender conscience.

On the 26th of October he was again at Sandgate, and purposing to "set apart a day for devotional exercises, in which my main objects will be Divine guidance and blessing as to my children, and for a blessing on my new plan of life. For guidance and strength to walk in the right path. Oh what cause have I for gratitude!"

To the eye of a stranger he appeared at this time full "ten years older" than he was; but more intimate acquaintance removed this impression. Delicacy of health had indeed set on him already some of the external marks of age, and a stoop which he contracted early and which lessened his apparent stature, added much to this effect. But the agility of his step, the quickness of all his senses, (though he only heard with one ear,) his sparkling eye, and the compass and beauty of his voice, contradicted all these first appearances. And those who listened with delight to the freshness and exuberance of thoughts, sometimes deeply serious, sometimes playful and humorous, which enriched his conversation, could hardly believe that he had long borne the weight even of manly years. At the breakfast table, and again from the setting in of evening until midnight were his gayest times; at the last, especially, all his faculties were in the

fullest exercise; and when being read to in the family circle, which was his delight, he poured forth all his stores, gathering around him book after book to illustrate, question, or confirm, the immediate subject of the evening. On the 5th Nov. 1812, he thus writes to Mrs. Hannah More.

“You really provoke me, my dear friend, when you begin your letter by saying that you are always sorry to break in upon me. As if you did not know, that to hear from you is always to me like a piece of fine smooth-shaven down to a horseman who is almost worn out by plodding his weary way through deep clayey roads, or picking his steps among stony paths. The very animal he rides is revived by the change, and instinctively sets up a canter. I suppose my reader is the animal’s archetype; though he, less lively than the four-footed performer, does not seem to partake of the animation. Or rather, to speak the truth, he would not, for I need not assure you that I do not commit your epistles to his perusal. The idea was suggested by his being at this moment at my side, in a state not unaptly described by my representation. * * * * *

“To see so little of you is a standing grievance of my life (I speak seriously). But you possess a first place in my heart. May the Almighty support and bless you. I am concerned for poor Patty also. But *this vile body!* is to be the exclamation here below. By and by it will be, Thanks to God, who hath given us the victory through Jesus Christ! Farewell. Let me hear from you occasionally, and never be so affected again as to talk of breaking in upon me.

“Mrs. Wilberforce desires me to send her kindest remembrances; give mine to the sisterhood, and believe me,

Ever your sincere and affectionate friend,

W. WILBERFORCE.

“P. S. Alas! alas! this sad war with America! I never felt any public incident so deeply. Yet on the whole I thank God I can lay my head on my pillow in

peace, for our government is not chargeable with the blood-guiltiness; but Madison, Jefferson, &c.”

In the quiet hours which he could now command, he was looking forward to his London life, and resolving on such rules as he thought would be then useful to him. Above all he now determined, “when not unavoidably prevented by company or House of Commons, to take an hour, or at least half an hour, for private devotions, including Scripture reading and meditation, immediately before family prayers. Besides other benefits, one will be to send me back into society with a more spiritual mind, and to help me to preserve it through the evening, and to make the conversation more edifying and instructive. How can I expect a blessing otherwise? Oh let me reform here; it has been my standing sin of late: I must therefore remember that I shall find it difficult to adhere to the reformed system. The best hope will arise from my bearing about with me a deep impression of the difficulty, and of my own weakness, and of the urgent need of Divine help.—Also aim at universal holiness, guard against self-indulgence, and love of human estimation. Oh how that vile passion will creep in! Even now it is at work fold within fold. Lord, Thou knowest me; I cast myself on Thy pardoning mercy and sanctifying grace.”

Upon his return to London, he set apart a day for more especial private devotions. “I have had serious doubts, whether or not it is right to do so when I have so many important subjects to consider, and so much to do; yet the examples as well as the writings of good men, and above all, the Holy Scriptures, taking the precepts which directly treat of fasting and comparing them with others, warrant it. N. B. Christ’s words about the demons, which expelled only by fasting and prayer. Then as to my being now extremely occupied, Owen’s remark in some degree applies, (inference from Malachi,) that we should give God if needful our best time. O Lord, Thy blessing can render far more than a day’s time as nothing even in my worldly business, and if the main-

spring's force be strengthened, and its working improved, (cleansed from dust and foulness,) surely the machine will go better. Lord, what I do I trust is pleasing to Thee, accept and bless my service."

"Let me look over my 'grounds for humiliation,' my 'company regulations.' How sadly apt am I to lose all recollection of these, and of keeping my heart when I am in society! Lord, strengthen me with might. Let Christ dwell, not merely occasionally visit, but dwell in my heart by faith. Let me cultivate more an habitual love of God—Butler and Barrow—habitual gratitude. Let me try some memorandum analogous to the phylactery. See Numb. xv. 38, 40.

With such resolutions he returned to London life, and found himself as much engrossed with public affairs as when he represented the interests of the tenth part of the kingdom. The important questions which continually recurred before the House of Commons—The condition of Europe—The war with America—and African slavery, all pressed upon his attention, but not to the exclusion of other things. The following extracts from his Diary exhibit a lively picture of his occupations.

"Dec. 7th. Breakfasters numerous, and not clear from company till time to go to British and Foreign Bible Society's monthly committee meeting, to get a grant of Testaments for the West Indies; 2000 willingly granted. To Babington's and wrote letters. Met Butterworth fresh from Ireland . . his communications show sad hostility of mind between Protestants and Roman Catholics . . then House. Moving for papers about Slave Trade at Cape, and Mauritius. Lord Wellington's grant of £100,000 to buy an estate. After the House a discussion at Henry Thornton's with Babington, the Dean, and Stephen. At night home with the Dean. 8th. Fuller of Kettering breakfasted, and talked much about East Indian Gospel Communication plan. Then town, Manufacturers' Committee—Duke of Kent in the chair, and very civil. Then Hatchard's letters—home to dinner—Stephen, Simeon, the Dean, and others—the House. 12th. Forced to dine with the Duke of Gloucester. One

of his mixed parties—Lord Sidmouth—Vansittart—Hastings, quite aged. All splendid—Lord Sidmouth—clever. Sheridan said of a person whom Lord Sidmouth does not like, O he has an iron heart, but Lord Sidmouth has a fine spirit. 14th. To town to find out about Dr. B—from Yarmouth, who had written for £20, without which he with his wife would be ruined—could learn nothing—so sent it doubtingly. African Institution, and home. Voice not well to-day. Duchess of York took my antelope. 18th. Letters and callers till two. African Institution. House on grant to Russia £200,000*—spoke but middlingly. 23d. To town about twelve to meet Brougham at Lord Bathurst's about Parke's Journals. Heard of Russian meeting, and that Duke of York in the chair. Went to Crown and Anchor, and found Lord Liverpool, Duke of York, Lord Castlereagh, N. Vansittart, Lord Harrowby, Lord Buckinghamshire, and several under secretaries, and four or five Russian merchants—Samuel Thornton speaking—sixty or seventy common people—meeting utterly unknown—tried to get it put off; but being desired to speak, did shortly—rather pressing adjournment, but they had not presence of mind for it. Brougham had sent to know if any Whig, and then he would come. I pressed him to write to Lord Holland to make a second meeting. I fear the folly, if not worse, of not taking pains to have a full meeting, (perhaps for fear of having the business taken out of certain hands,) prevented more notice; and now there is danger of its being considered as cooked up between ministers and a few interested Russian merchants—sad, so to spoil a noble work which would have taken admirably, and have given rise to a noble testimony of national admiration, esteem, benevolence, and gratitude. 24th. Town—read Report, corrected from Allen's draught at Freemasons' Hall—distressed manufacturers—Duke of Cambridge in the chair—he had

* The sum of 200,000*l.* was voted for the relief of the sufferings brought upon the Russians by their gallant resistance to the common enemy. The meeting of the 23d, was to raise funds for the same purpose by private charity.

never heard of Russian meeting, nor Stephen. So vexed at the folly of its managers, that after talking with Brougham and Lord Bathurst, I wrote to Lord Liverpool and S. Thornton to get the meeting stated as a preliminary one before Christmas. 26th. To Lord Liverpool's by half-past eleven, to confer about undoing the evil done by the Russian subscription management. Lord Harrowby, Vansittart, S. Thornton came. Agreed upon notifying another meeting—acting on my advice. Still I fear all or a hundredth part of the mischief cannot be undone. Thence to secretary of Russian embassy, to tell him that the manufacturers wished to give supplies of manufactures.

“30th. Owen of Lanark, Dale's son-in-law and partner, breakfasted with me, and stayed long talking with me of his plan of education, and of rendering manufactures and morals compatible.” This visit was renewed soon after, and Mr. Grant and Henry Thornton met Mr. Owen by appointment. When Mr. Owen was proceeding to detail his schemes, he gently hinted that the ladies present might be suffered to retire from a discussion which must prove beyond their comprehension. Mr. Wilberforce eagerly dissented from the proposition; and it was well for Mr. Owen that he yielded, for he had not read long before “Grant, Henry Thornton and I were all fast asleep, and the despised ladies were his only real audience.” “One of my great principles, Mr. Wilberforce,” said the schemer, “is, that persons ought to place themselves in the situation of others, and act as they would wish themselves to be treated.” “Is that quite a new principle, Mr. Owen?” was his answer, with that look of suppressed humour, which gave his countenance an archness of expression which no description can convey. “I think I have read something very like it in a book called the New Testament.” “Very possibly it may be so,” gravely answered the imperturbable philosopher. Yet such was his universal kindness, that Mr. Owen left him to tell others that Mr. Wilberforce was charmed with his discoveries.

At times, in the secret struggles of his heart, he la-

ments that he was "unable to realize the presence of God. It was as if there had been a wall of separation that I could not penetrate or see over; and my heart dead and cold. Surely it is not enthusiasm to notice these sensations, as David does. Lord, renew and quicken me." But this was not his common state. His secret entries testify that habitual peace, combined with the deepest humility, were in him the blessed fruits of keeping God's watch carefully. They are well expressed in an entry at this time. "I am just returned from a highly impressive sermon by Mr. Dunn. I hope that my sensibility is in some degree the effect of the Holy Spirit, the knocking of Christ at the door of my heart. I must not spend any of my few minutes before dinner in writing; but let me just record my feelings of deep humiliation, yet of confiding, though humble faith—looking to the Saviour as my only ground of hope. I cast myself at the foot of the cross, bewailing my exceeding sinfulness and unprofitableness, deeply, most deeply aggravated by the infinity of my mercies. I plead thy precious promises, and earnestly pray to Thee to shed abroad in my heart more love, more humility, more faith, more hope, more peace, and joy; in short, to fill me with all the fulness of God, and make me more meet to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Then shall I also be better in all the relations of life in which I am now so defective, and my light will shine before men, and I shall adorn the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things."

A busy session was now opening on him. "I am reading," he says, (Feb. 5th,) "on Catholic Emancipation, and thinking too. I grieve to see so much prejudice. Talking the question over with friends; one, though a most able man, not knowing that Dissenters may sit in parliament." This question now agitated all the country, and there were "meetings against Roman Catholics in all parts of England." "I am very doubtful which way right." This was his only question; general popularity and party principle were no rule for him to steer by; and though he suffered keenly from shocking, upon such a question, the conscientious scruples of those whose prin-

ciples he most esteemed, yet even this feeling could not for a moment bias his decision. "Lord direct me," he prays on this question; "all the religious people are on the other side, but they are sadly prejudiced." "It grieves me to separate from the Dean, and all my religious friends; but conscience must be obeyed. God does not direct us to use carnal weapons in his cause." He displays at this time the exact balance of his mind in a letter to William Hey.

"Near London, Feb. 22, 1813.

"My Dear Sir,

I have been and still am longing to devote my time and thoughts to the Roman Catholic question; yet pamphlets and other documents lie unopened on my table. My opinion is far from made up on that momentous subject; and I heartily wish I could employ a few weeks in quietly studying and considering it. It is not however on this head that I now take up the pen to address you, though mindful of your late kind communications, I begin with a few words on it; and having touched on it, I will go on to add, that I am quite decided against granting to the Roman Catholics eligibility to *all* civil offices. My chief doubts are concerning their admissibility into parliament; and there is one consideration which I do not see that even you yourself, who to do you justice have considered the question more maturely than nineteen-twentieths of those who write or speak on it, have duly borne it in mind. The Bishop of Lincoln's charge, which is otherwise able, entirely leaves it out, and even proceeds on a supposition of there being no such consideration. It is that whatever the Roman Catholics, if admitted into the House of Commons, could effect through the medium of law for establishing their hierarchy and injuring that of the Protestants in Ireland, they can do just as well (in one important respect better) through the medium of members of parliament, *called* Protestants, but who being elected by Roman Catholic voters, and having little or no real religion themselves, are implicitly subservient to their constituents' purposes. I say, they

can serve the Roman Catholics even better in one respect, inasmuch as they do not call into action the opposite Protestant spirit in the same degree.

But while the Roman Catholics thus possess parliamentary influence, they do not possess it in such a manner as to render it a personal privilege, or gratification to them; and therefore so as to give them an interest in the existing legislature, and to connect them to the Protestant system by the various ties which unite men who act together in parliament, and which would render it improbable that they would join a foreign enemy in separating Ireland from Great Britain; and where can be the wisdom of retaining the prison dress, when you have set the men at liberty? I must break off. I remain, my dear sir, with cordial esteem and regard,

Your sincere and affectionate friend,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Under this view it was a mere question of political expediency. The principle had been long since conceded. Political power the Romanists possessed already, and the only object was to provide for its being most innocently exercised. He was now almost convinced that this end would be promoted by a change of system; for that "the actual state of the laws," as he told Mr. Charles Butler, "so far from affording any security to the Established Church, or to the Protestant cause in general, augmented their danger; and so far from lessening or weakening the influence of the Roman Catholic church over its members, maintained and extended its force."

As yet, though he "had prepared" himself "upon this question," he "had found no opportunity for taking part in the debate. Lord, direct me. I have been reading some of the East Indian charter documents, which are immensely voluminous; and on Catholic Question. How difficult it is to attain to truth in these complicated cases; and therefore with what moderation should we hold our own opinions, and with what candour allow for those of others; whereas in both the exact opposite prevails! Alas! Lord, guide and bless me. Blessed be God, they

cannot be finally wrong in thy sight who obey conscience, having taken due pains to inform themselves and judge rightly."

But this great question was far from having an undivided hold upon his thoughts. Besides many other minor matters, he had perfectly resolved to fight to the very last the battle of Christianity in India, and the moment of the contest now drew near. Though he had been long making preparations, he had not satisfied himself. "I sadly fear," he says on the 16th of March, "that we have been too negligent about the grand question of communicating Christianity to our Indian fellow-subjects. We have heard of excellent Martyn's death in Persia, on his way to the Mediterranean homewards. It is a mysterious Providence. Alas, when the interior is opened, the missionary and religious party in India are not so much at one, nor so free from human infirmity, as I had supposed. Oh did the world see into the hearts of religious professors, how much would it triumph over them! Yet they are better as well as worse than the world suspects. It confirms old Baxter, 'Good men neither so good, nor bad men often so bad, as the world supposes.'"

It was evident that the struggle would be arduous. The great mass of Anglo-Indians were convinced that the attempt to Christianize the East must infallibly cost us our dominion; and though they might reluctantly assent to the scanty ecclesiastical establishment for the English residents in India, which government had been persuaded to propose, they were determined to abate none of their hostility to missionary efforts. They proposed therefore that the entire regulation of the subject should be left for the next twenty years to the East India Company, who had unequivocally shown what would be their rule of conduct. On this point then the contest was to turn.

The temper of the House of Commons could not be mistaken, and it was only by bringing forcibly to bear upon it the religious feeling of the country, that he could hope to carry through this most important measure.

And now that he was in the strife, he set about the necessary steps with an energy and resolution which had never been exceeded even in the vigour of his early manhood, when he fought the Abolition battle. "The truth is," he tells Mr. Hey, "and a dreadful truth it is, that the opinions of nine-tenths, or at least of a vast majority, of the House of Commons would be against any motion which the friends of religion might make; but I trust it is very different in the body of our people; and petitions are to be promoted with a view to bring their sentiments and feelings to bear upon the opposite tenets and dispositions of the members of parliament. Surely there can be no doubt that all who are zealous in the cause of Christ would do their utmost to enlighten our East India fellow-subjects. I must have sent you a letter which I drew up last year for general circulation: I would send a copy but that it is out of print. It was composed too hastily, but it contained such arguments and motives as I think no Christian could resist."

Not a day was lost in calling to his aid the expressed religious feeling of the country. On the day following the first debate he wrote a multitude of letters to all his leading country correspondents in the following strain.

"London, March 25, 1813.

"My dear Sir,

I wish I had an hour or two which I could give to writing to you, but I have scarce as many minutes. The subject on which I wish to open my mind to you is the pending renewal of the East India Company's charter, and the opportunity it offers of doing away that great national crime of committing the control of the only entrance for religious light and moral improvement into India to the Directors, who are decidedly adverse to every attempt that can be made to Christianize, or raise in the scale of being our East Indian fellow-subjects.

I beg you will attend to these last expressions; for great as is the importance of the subject in a religious point of view, it is only less important in that of humanity. It is a shocking idea that we should leave sixty millions

of our fellow-subjects, nay of our tenants, (for we collect about seventeen millions sterling from the rent of their lands,) to remain in a state of barbarism and ignorance, the slaves of the most cruel and degrading superstition, lest they should not be so easily governed by a small number of Europeans; though it is the opinion of many of the ablest East Indian statesmen that this doctrine is as false as it is wicked; and that by gradually and prudently proceeding to Christianize our East Indian population we should greatly add to the stability of our Oriental empire. Now I grieve to say, it is intended to commit, as before, to the Court of Directors the uncontrolled power of granting licenses, without which no one shall be permitted to go to India; indeed to leave them the exclusive direction as to religious and moral concerns in all that regards our East Indian dominions. Mr. Stephen, I, and others, loudly exclaimed against the proposed system of barring out all moral and religious light from the East Indies, and declared that we were confident the friends of religion, morality, and humanity throughout the kingdom would petition on the subject. Now you I trust will make good our words. You petitioned in the case of the Slave Trade, and those petitions were eminently useful; so they would be now; and what is more, after having been talked of, their not coming would be highly injurious; so lose no time. The petitions should be from each place separately.

To you I will confess I feel another consideration strongly. The Methodists and Dissenters will, I doubt not, petition; but let it not be said that they only take an interest in the happiness of mankind, and that the members of our Church are not as zealous when there is a real call for such exertions. I cannot write to-day to Huddersfield, or Bradford, but do you exert yourself.

I remain ever sincerely yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

He was now "excessively busy stirring up petitions," feeling that it was "the greatest object which men ever pursued." "The spirit of petitioning scarcely spreads

as one could wish." Yet the heaven was at work, and he soon adds, that "already Bristol, Hull, Glasgow, (excellent resolutions,) and Birmingham have spoken out." His own personal efforts meanwhile were incessant. Upon the 24th of March he went "early to town to Freemasons' Hall for committee of annual meeting of the African Institution. After business over, consulted about East India charter's religious bearing, and agreed on a public meeting for Monday, March 29th." Two days later he was again "off early, and after calling at Lord Liverpool's and Buckinghamshire's, to Seeley's. Meeting of committee on the religious bearing of the East India Company's charter. Long discussion." On the Monday following, March 29th, "an effective public meeting on the subject was held at the City of London Tavern."

On the next day began the examination of the witnesses before the House of Commons. This was now his daily business. "Writing almost all morning about East India charter—examinations, sharp work—extreme ignorance and bigotry. We examine daily from half-past four to near eight before other business." The object of the enemies of missions may be seen from the general tenor of their questions. "Would not," they inquired, "the appearance of bishops encourage a fear amongst the natives that force would ultimately be used to establish Christianity amongst them?" "Would it be consistent with the security of the British Empire in India, that missionaries should preach publicly that Mahomet is an impostor, or speak in opprobrious terms of the Brahmins and their religious rites?" In such an examination they had clearly a perilous advantage. Few or no witnesses could be produced to prove the safety of what had so rarely been attempted; whilst almost every Anglo-Indian was ready to come forward and swell by his separate evidence the general cry of danger.

This made the issue of the question most uncertain; "I should not much wonder if, unless the sense of the religious part of the public is expressed by petitions, both the ecclesiastical establishment for India, and all security

for preventing the door from being barred against the admission of religious and moral light, should be altogether abandoned. Now this conduct it appears to me would be one of the most crying insults that ever called down the vengeance of Heaven. While we are going so far in favouring the Roman Catholics, shall Christianity be the only religion which is not to be tolerated in India?"

The examinations were evidently tending towards this result; and something must be attempted to prevent a fatal impression of the risk of all exertion being fixed upon the House. No time was to be lost; and as the examination by the Lords was to commence the following day, a meeting was summoned on Sunday, the 4th of April, at Henry Thornton's, Palace Yard, at three—"Stephen, Grant, Henry Thornton, Babington, and I, to discuss about the Lords' examination of witnesses on religious business—agreed that I should call to-morrow on Lord Grenville and Lord Wellesley, and settled one or two other points. Dined there, which I had not done on Sunday since I lived there."

He was so convinced that his cause could only be carried by the influence of the religious community, that although one Anglo-Indian witness had declared "the resolutions of the recent meeting in the city likely to excite a general ferment amongst the Hindoos, and favour an idea which (once obtained) would cause our expulsion from Bengal and India," he determined on appealing to another. On the 13th, therefore, he was "early in the city, at the general meeting of the Church Missionary Society for Africa and the East. Made the report of our deputation, and agreed to a petition to both Houses, for introducing Christianity in India. As the best means of supplying the defect which was occasioned by the omission of all evidence upon the subject of religion, he "moved for sundry papers to illustrate the moral character of the Hindoos, and the shocking practices prevalent there."

The Easter week now for a short time intercepted the proceedings of the House of Commons, and he had long

been engaged to spend it with his family in visiting Lord Gambier. "Our going put off once or twice already, but after a severe struggle I resolved to give it up entirely. I cannot spare the time now, when it is so much needed for East Indian religion and seeing people on it." This was one great branch of his exertions. All had access to him, and he could enter everywhere. He was the link between the most dissimilar allies. Bishops and Baptists found in him a common term. "After breakfast Messrs. Gutteridge, Weymouth, and Shaw, three Baptist committee gentlemen, called on me about East India Baptist missionaries. Called on the Bishop of St. David's, and tried to stir him up." "Called Earl ——'s about East India religious business, found him full of prejudice and ignorance. How sad that so noble a mind as his should be rendered so indifferent to the happiness of our fellow-creatures!"

In the midst of this engrossing struggle, he was threatened with a serious attack of sickness, and for one day was very ill. The temper of his mind under this distressing interruption, is a striking proof of the degree in which the prayer with which he entered on the cause had graciously been answered. He had asked for simplicity of purpose, and his cheerfulness when laid aside, shows how pure had been the motives of his activity. "April 24th. A blank day; and really I can do nothing but think of God's goodness to me, in that even when I am ill, I suffer no pain. General Calvert told me of Col. ——'s most painful operation, (twenty minutes long,) after great previous suffering, undergoing immense fatigues, and unable to spare himself when suffering agonies. Oh! how much will men bear for a corruptible crown! Poor fellow! it is very affecting. May God touch his heart. How thankful ought I to be for having been spared it all! Here, as usual, God most merciful. My Saviour spares me."

The hidden safeguard of his happy simplicity of purpose, may be found in the record of his secret hours. "Secured," he says at his busiest time, "an hour for private devotions this morning and yesterday, and found

the effects of it." "This East Indian object," was his declaration when he undertook it, "is assuredly the greatest that ever interested the heart, or engaged the efforts of man. How wonderful that a private man should have such an influence on the temporal and eternal happiness of millions; literally, millions on millions yet unborn! O God, make me more earnest for Thy glory; and may I act more from real love and gratitude to my redeeming Lord." "Oh how does this little check of sickness," he continues after his recovery, "impress on me the duty of working while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work! Let me not take my estimate of myself from others who do not know me, but from my own self-knowledge and conscience. Oh what cause have I for contrition! What misspent time, what wasted talents, what means of grace (no one so many and so great) with how little profit; what self-indulgent habits; what softness, instead of the hardness of a good soldier of Christ! It may be shown in any improper want of self-denial. O Lord, may my faith and love be more active, bringing forth more the fruits of the Spirit."

In this temper he resumed his work. Its conduct needed great address. All the feeling of the more religious classes of the nation must be brought effectively to bear, for political assistance he had none.

The fresh application upon which the friends of the cause now decided had a more favourable issue. May 26th, he says, "Lord Buckinghamshire acceded to our terms;" and on the following day when he "visited the public offices, Lord Castlereagh agreed to Lord Buckinghamshire's and our arrangements for East India Christianizing Resolutions—far surpassing my expectations." "Let me express my humiliation," he adds upon the following Sunday, "and my gratitude to God, for enabling us to agree with government as to the conditions for sending out missionaries, and in general as to improving, moralizing, and Christianizing India. I humbly hope that God has great designs in view for the East, and that they will be executed by Great Britain."

But though the government yielded to his wishes the

battle was not over. The Resolutions which they had adopted, the House of Commons might reject; and in the House of Commons lay the strength of the Anglo-Indian party. The day of trial was approaching; upon the 22d of June Lord Castlereagh moved the adoption of the 13th Resolution. "The appearance of the House at the beginning of the evening was as bad as could be, but Lord Castlereagh opened the subject very discreetly and judiciously." The morning of the 22d had been given up to preparation, and he was now at his post, with his mind full of his subject. Never did he speak with greater power, or produce more impression. Twenty years before, he had appeared in the same place, the eloquent advocate of the same cause. He had beyond all expectation been spared to lead the onset in a new engagement; and he told the House that his silence during that long period was not because the subject had faded from his recollection, but because he had meanwhile been devoted to the payment of another debt to humanity which was even yet but imperfectly discharged. He went through the whole subject at length, proving the degraded character of the Hindoo superstition, and calmly reasoning out his own conclusions; yet relieving the unavoidable prolixity of such a speech by occasional flashes of the brightest eloquence. "He who knows my heart," he said in closing his account of the Hindoo superstitions, "knows that I have not drawn this melancholy picture to exult over its blackness. It is with grief and shame I view it; mourning, sir, over my own country, which for fifty years and more has left so many millions of our fellow-creatures in this state of misery and vice. I am not bringing a bill of indictment against the Indian race—but I have lived long enough to learn 'that flatterers are not friends.' I am the true friend of this people, who am willing to allow their present degradation, that I may raise them to a higher level."

"We carried it, about 89 to 36, beyond all hope. I heard afterwards that many good men had been praying for us all night. Oh what cause for thankfulness; yet almost intoxicated with success." The impression

of nine hundred petitions, a number them wholly without precedent on such a subject, could not be mistaken. "Let no man think," was Mr. Wilberforce's warning to the House, "that the petitions which have loaded our table, have been produced by a burst of momentary enthusiasm; or that the zeal of the petitioners will be soon expended. No, sir, it will be found to be steady as the light of heaven. While the sun and moon continue to shine in the firmament, so long will this object be pursued with unabated ardour until the great work be accomplished."

One great argument of his opponents was grounded on the enthusiastic character which they imputed to the missionary body. India hitherto had seen no missionary who was a member of the English Church, and imputations could be cast more readily on "Anabaptists and fanatics." These attacks Mr. Wilberforce indignantly refuted, and well had the noble conduct of the band at Serampore deserved this vindication. "I do not know," he often said, "a finer instance of the moral sublime, than that a poor cobbler working in his stall should conceive the idea of converting the Hindoos to Christianity; yet such was Dr. Carey. Why Milton's planning his *Paradise Lost* in his old age and blindness was nothing to it. And then when he had gone to India, and was appointed by Lord Wellesley to a lucrative and honourable station in the college of Fort William, with equal nobleness of mind, he made over all his salary (between £1000 and £1500 per annum) to the general objects of the mission. By the way, nothing ever gave me a more lively sense of the low and mercenary standard of your men of honour, than the manifest effect produced upon the House of Commons by my stating this last circumstance. It seemed to be the only thing which moved them." Dr. Carey had been especially attacked, and "a few days afterwards the member who had made this charge came to me, and asked me in a manner which in a noted duellist could not be mistaken, 'Pray, Mr. Wilberforce, do you know a Mr. Andrew Fuller, who has written to desire me to retract the statement which I

made with reference to Dr. Carey? ‘Yes,’ I answered with a smile, ‘I know him perfectly, but depend upon it you will make nothing of him in your way; he is a respectable Baptist minister at Kettering.’ In due time there came from India an authoritative contradiction of the slander. It was sent to me, and for two whole years did I take it in my pocket to the House of Commons to read it to the House whenever the author of the accusation should be present; but during that whole time he never once dared to show himself in the House.”

His own personal influence had been a powerful instrument in gaining this successful result. Never had he been able to bring forward in the House so openly his own religious principles; never had they been more respectfully received. “Last session,” says a shrewd and even caustic critic, whose sentiments were wholly different, “when the House had been tired night after night with discussing the endless questions relating to Indian policy, Mr. Wilberforce, with a just confidence in his powers, ventured to broach the hackneyed subject of Hindoo conversion. He spoke three hours, but nobody seemed fatigued: all indeed were pleased; some with the ingenious artifices of his manner, but most with the glowing language of his heart. Much as I differed from him in opinion, it was impossible not to be delighted with his eloquence; and though I wish most heartily that the Hindoos might be left to their own Trinity, yet I felt disposed to agree with him, that some good must arise to the human mind, by being engaged in a controversy which will exercise most of its faculties.”

His friends were looking with some anxiety to the effect which these great exertions might produce upon his weakly frame.

This too was far from having been his sole business in the last session. Almost every day had brought its separate burden. A few extracts from his Diary, with which it was impossible to break the chain of facts connected with his leading business, will show how closely the interstices it left were packed with other matters.

“March 4th. Lock Hospital meeting. Then African

institution—Duke of Gloucester. Dined Henry Thornton's, and House. 5th. Hudson and Smith, chemists about Apothecaries' Bill. Then Burder and Osgood about latter's plan. Wrote a little. Town—Berbice meeting. Long talk with Lord —— about the governor's ill usage of us. Poor Lord —— very unreasonable and positive. How calm one can be, when acting with real disinterestedness! Yet curious, that I only arguing with him for his own interest and credit's sake. 19th. Castlereagh showed me what he had told me before, Sweden's abolition and Guadaloupe surrender—Euge. April 7th. Jews—London Tavern. First stone laying at Bethnall Green—Duke of Kent, Lord Erskine and Dundas, &c. Dinner afterwards. Grand day, and above £1000 collected. Erskine's animated speech. Way's fire. Frey's pathos. 10th. African Institution meeting. Lords Grenville, Landsdown, &c. about Registry Bill, and large meeting. 20th. Canning came to me about Roman Catholic Bill; with him to Mr. Ponsonby by Grattan's desire. Mr. Elliot there. Sir J. Newport, Romilly, and Sir Ar. Pigott, besides Ponsonby and Grattan. Talked over the matter. 28th. Breakfast with Canning. After talking over Roman Catholic business, to Hatchard's, to meet Blair, Pearson, John Villier's, &c. to revive the Lock Asylum. 29th. Forced to attend a meeting for Lock Asylum—right, but an hour and half expended. Called Grattan's, Lord Erskine's and Donoughmore's. Lodgings—and House. Then with Henry Thornton to City of London Tavern—anniversary dinner for foreigners in distress, Duke of Gloucester in the chair—very civil. Near 200 people, and excellent object, but no foreign minister. Near £1000 collected after dinner.

“May 4th. Annual sermon, and meeting of Church Missionary Society for Africa and East. Dealtry, excellent sermon. Meeting afterwards and spoke. Late to Asiatic Society, where took the chair—then House. 5th. British and Foreign Bible Society anniversary—full meeting—I spoke, and well received. Dined Lord Teignmouth's—Bishops of Salisbury, St. David's, Cloyne;

and Norwich was to have been there, but prevented. 6th, Prayer Book and Homily Society—spoke, after a sermon, which could not attend causâ meeting at Gloucester House—Lord Grey, Lansdown, Stephen, Macaulay, Harrison, Vansittart, about Registry Bill. 7th. Jewish Meeting Anniversary—sermon yesterday, Randolph of Bath—I spoke. 12th. Archbishop of Cashel called morning—much talk with him about Ireland. 13th. Morning busy. Dined hastily Henry Thornton's. House on Catholic Question. Charles Grant spoke, beautiful but too elaborately. I, alas, too strong afterwards; as professing to act from higher principles, I ought to be more affectionate, and gentle, and meek."

This entry is a striking instance of the careful watch over his tongue which he so jealously maintained. Other members in the course of the debate declared that he had not spoken more severely than the occasion fully justified. But he judged by another standard, and in his next Sunday's meditations beautifully adds—"Having so little time I must not spend any in writing. Let me only record my own grief and shame; and all probably from private devotions having been contracted, and so God let me stumble. How much too strongly did I speak in the House of Commons, concerning Sir. J. Hippisley! Alas, how little exhibiting the temper of the meek and lowly Jesus. Yet I humbly hope I have bewailed my sin with bitter contrition, and but for the weakness of my eyes could shed many tears. Lord, I flee to Thee for mercy, and do Thou guide and direct me. Yesterday's decision to have a committee of inquiry concerning the state and treatment in law and fact of the slaves and coloured people in our West India islands, will bring on me an immense load if I undertake it; greater I fear than I can bear. Yet, Lord, to Thee I look, for 'Thou delightest in mercy.' O soften, quicken, warm, and sanctify me."

CHAPTER VI.

Mad. De Stael—Social Character—Efforts to promote Abolition by Continental Powers—Emperor Alexander.

IMMEDIATELY upon the prorogation of parliament he made his escape to Sandgate, where his children gathered around him, and he watched over them as usual with the deepest interest. "I can scarcely," he wrote to a friend, with an enclosure which had been sent for his perusal, "conceive any earthly pleasure greater than that of receiving such a letter from a beloved son, who shows by his conduct that he writes the real sentiments and feelings of his heart. I am conscious of my own extremely inadequate powers in all that concerns the work of education, but I humbly trust that I can say with truth that the spiritual interests of my children are my first object; I mean that I wish to see them become real Christians, rather than great scholars, or eminent in any other way: and I earnestly pray to God for wisdom to direct me, and that His grace may be given in large measure to my children; resolving at the same time, since the Almighty acts by means, to consider thoroughly and after consideration to pursue the dictates of my judgment. I own I am rather sanguine in my hopes of the result, on the ground of the Scripture promises. Join your prayers, my dear friend, to mine, and give me also from time to time the benefits of your friendly counsel." In the same tone he tells Mrs. Wilberforce—"My best hopes for them rest on the declaration that God hears and grants the prayers of his people through the merits and intercession of the Saviour. Oh let us press on to a higher proficiency in the Christian life as the surest expedient for their good. We do not—even those who hold the truths of Christianity correctly—we do not think enough or speak enough of the Saviour. I would gladly have Him continually before me. I find the sense of His presence produces a humble, calm, con-

fiding dependence, making me 'walk softly.' To you I open all my heart. I feel very lonely without all of you, though nothing can be kinder than Stephen."

The conclusion of this autumn was spent in paying several long-promised visits of duty and affection in the south and west of England. Amongst those which had been the longest promised was one to Barley Wood. It was seven years since he had seen Hannah More, except a single day that she had spent with him in the summer; and it was with no little pleasure that he again found himself, his wife and daughters, beneath the roof of the sisterhood. Death indeed had visited their dwelling, and taken one from the united band; but she who was gone had died in Christian hope, and they who yet survived lived on in Christian cheerfulness. It was still, as it ever had been, the favoured seat of intellectual and religious sunshine.

Parliament had been sitting nearly for a fortnight when Mr. Wilberforce returned to town; but no important questions had required his presence. Little more was done in the early part of the session than to follow with votes of thanks the successful progress of our army.

But though little was at this time doing in the House, his time was fully occupied. His children had gathered round him for the Christmas holidays, and he was giving his usual attention to them. "Chatting with them all the evening, and reading Miss Edgeworth's tales to them. I extremely wish to attend to them, but I sadly feel my incompetence to discharge the parental office." These feelings were quickened at this time by his seeing "in the newspapers that poor C. N. was killed. Alas! alas! I fear it will go hard with my good old friend his father. I used, I fear too sanguinely, to hope that God would hear the prayers of all who called on Him for their children. Yet surely good old N. prayed, and so did she, for poor Charles. Oh what a lesson to us, to give all diligence with our children, as well as with ourselves, and also to live closely with Him, that our interest with Him may be greater!" "S.'s interesting ac-

count of poor C. N.—yet while eulogizing him, said he had no benevolence or kindly feelings. S. thinks that he was overdosed with religion, and that of an offensive kind, while young. It is an awful instance, and well deserves the study of all parents; they should labour to render religion as congenial as possible. It is worth inquiring what the failure was in poor N.'s case, if any; which it seems to be difficult not to suppose, considering all his sons to be such as they are."

Many other matters soon claimed a large share of his attention. Amongst the most troublesome was a long inquiry into charges brought by a governor of Sierra Leone against his friend, Zachary Macaulay. "Poor Macaulay, after all his sufferings, labours, and disinterestedness for Africa, in reality put on his defence; and having the mortification of seeing even well-disposed people jealous, and taking up with idle and malignant tales against him—what a lesson to us not to set our heart on worldly favour, even that of good men! Yet he will come pure out of the fire."

His full London season was now begun, and he was often "worried by many morning callers upon business." "Breakfasters," too abounded; while all his rooms were occupied by various friends. "Dr. Buchanan came to stay with us a little. Dear Bowdler also an inmate—much pleasing talk." Yet however he was occupied, he could not decline any pressing work of mercy. On the 3d of January, "we were," he says, "a very large party at breakfast, Mr. Cardale and several others, first time about the Lascars and Chinese brought over in our East India ships; and shall we not provide for them, or for their return?" In this work he called a few days later for Mr. Stephen's aid—

(Private.)

"My dear Stephen,

I have but a few moments for writing, but if you will be at liberty I will call on you between two and three o'clock, that we may proceed together, if you like to join me, to the East India House. At all events I wish

to let you know something of a case which has been some time before me. But consider yourself as having promised not to divulge it, without my permission. Mr. Cardale some few days ago brought hither three or four Lascars. It appears that these people, about 1500 in number, are quartered in Ratcliffe Highway, the East India Company paying ten shillings per head weekly for their board and lodging. Some neighbours reported that the poor creatures were very hardly treated, and there had been much private inquiry, and long and numerous discussions, before I was apprised of it.

Attention was kept more awake through some benevolent and intelligent young men employing their leisure in teaching them English, and in learning from them Bengalee, Hindoostanee, and Chinese. I was expecting almost daily to go into the city to inquire, when Mr. Cardale four or five days ago wrote me word, that the superintendents of these poor creatures had learned that some of them had been complaining of their treatment, and that they had therefore resolved to send the grumblers off by the first ship. Matters were in this state when about three quarters of an hour ago, surrounded by ten or twelve visitors of various sorts and sizes, I received the enclosed letter, which you will concur with me in thinking requires immediate attention. I mean therefore to proceed to the India House immediately after an interview with Lord Melville, which is appointed for half-past one o'clock. Will you meet me at the India House?

I am ever yours, in extreme haste,

W. WILBERFORCE."

The singleness of spirit in which he undertook such causes, may be seen in the alacrity with which he resigned the leading part to others. "Grant," he tells Mr. Babington, "has been asking me to spend some time with him to-morrow, to settle a plan for the protection, and I hope instruction, of the Lascars; will you help him to form it? It is a business just suited to you, and it would be aiding the accomplishment of a great

act of humanity as well as of friendship to Charles Grant, jun. who is to bring the business before the House of Commons. I believe you know some particulars about these people, to which I may add their willingness and capacity to receive instruction. Mrs. Babington will laugh and say, I am at my old trade of bringing you into the harness."

To put others forward was indeed his "old trade." He had set on foot about this time another plan, to which he found himself unable to attend as fully as he wished, and went down therefore to the committee whom he had set to work, to "advise their putting it into the hands of some other M. P. who could attend to it, and carry it through. It soon appeared that — had already made this very application to two M. P.'s. There could not," he continues with beautiful simplicity, "be better men for a business of this kind; and therefore, though it was not handsome in him towards me who had first named the matter to him, I appeared unconscious of it, and truly declared I would help them in any way I could, and that I was glad it was in such hands. It is a great part of true wisdom and Christian conduct to set others on good scents instead of following them oneself."

He was at this time busy in another charitable work, in which he was thrust forward into an unwilling prominence. The destitution on the continent, for which he had last year done much to obtain relief, was greatly aggravated by the ravages of the last campaign; and he was now most anxious to obtain substantial aid for the German sufferers. On the 27th of January, he was "off early to the City of London Tavern to the meeting for relieving the distressed Germans. I moved the first resolution. The Duke of Sussex prevented attending by the asthma. But a poor meeting as to our respectable people. Henry Thornton in the chair."

Not satisfied with this attempt, he was soon afterwards "trying to effect a meeting in the West End of the town." When he reached Freemason's Hall, upon the 25th, he found "the Archbishop already there, and the Duke of York soon after. All in confusion from one

‘contrary’ lord, who however I am told is a benevolent, kind-intentioned man. The Duke of Sussex behaved nobly about ceding the chair and then coming. He received me most kindly when I called on him about it. Though he had been led to consider himself as chairman, he gave it up most liberally, and said he trusted he should show he was actuated by a better principle than vanity. Sir James Mackintosh too has acted nobly in coming and being ready to speak, but we could not manage it either for him or for Charles Grant. I was at length called forward to second Lord Buckinghamshire’s motion of thanks to the Duke of York, and most kindly received. — burst into tears at seeing me so applauded. Madame de Stael there.* Oh while this should humble me in the dust from the consciousness how little I deserve their praises, how assiduous should it make me to use my influence wisely! How graciously God’s good providence favours me! I had scarcely thought at all before, and had no plan of speech, yet for a few sentences went on very well. My merciful Saviour has never yet forsaken me. O God, what thanks do I owe Thee!”

Besides these calls of charity and business, society had many claims upon him, and often occupied his time, though he watched more narrowly than ever over his motives and conduct when he entered into it. This spring affords some striking illustrations of his principles in this particular. “When attending,” on the 8th of February, “a meeting of the African institution, Sir S. Romilly told me aloud that Madame de Stael assured him she wished more to be acquainted with me than with any other person. The Duke of Gloucester made me by her express desire fix a day for meeting her at dinner, chez lui—Saturday se’nnight. This is mere vanity, and perhaps curiosity; and I felt my vanity a little rising too on the occasion. Oh how full are we of this degrading

* She has described this meeting in her *Considerations sur la Revolution Française*, “L’homme le plus aimé, et le plus considéré de toute l’Angleterre, M. Wilberforce, put à peine se faire entendre, tant les applaudissements couvraient sa voix.”

passion; and how diligently should we counteract it by calling up the ideas of what degrades us, and of the judgment we should form of others in whom we saw the same temper of mind! Thus we learn to abhor ourselves, and to sit in judgment on ourselves as on others. Lord, enable me thus to scrutinize and condemn myself more and more. She told the Duke of Gloucester that I did not think how really religious she was. I must read her *L'Allemagne*, in order not to excite her prejudices. It will also enable me better to distinguish between her religion and the true, in conversing with others."

"Feb. 19th. Dined Duke of Gloucester's to meet Madame de Stael, at her desire—Madame, her son and daughter, Duke, two aides-de-camp, Vansittart, Lord Erskine, poet Rogers, and others. Madame de Stael quite like her book, though less hopeful—complimenting me highly on Abolition—'All Europe,' &c. But I must not spend time in writing this. She asked me, and I could not well refuse, to dine with her on Friday to meet Lord Harrowby and Mackintosh, and poet Rogers on Tuesday se'nnight. This would lead to an endless round of dinners, but it neither suits my mind or body; when I dine late, the previous hours are worth little, and the rest of the evening goes to society. I greatly doubt about the doing any good by dinings-out. By going out now and then in the evening, when I have dined early, and am fresher and brisker, I should be better fitted to adorn religion and seize occasions of doing good; now I am often sleepy, and not having duly cultivated the religious principle by private devotions, it is weak, and I grow worldly and useless. I may fairly assign weak health, and dine early and so get more hours for business."

"I must secure more time for private devotion, for self-examination, for meditation, for keeping the heart, and even doing the duties of life, or the most pressing claims will carry it, not the strongest. I have been living far too publicly for me—'Notus magis omnibus.' Oh may it not be 'ignotus moritur sibi.' Lord, help me. The shortening of private devotions starves the soul, it

grows lean and faint. This must not be. Oh how sad, that after trying to lead a Christian life for twenty-eight years, I should be at all staggered by worldly company. Madame de Stael, &c. I will not however, please God, enter and be drawn into that magic circle into which they would tempt me."

"23d. Breakfast, Mr. Barnett about the poor. Letters. Wrote to Madame de Stael and poet Rogers, to excuse myself from dining with them. It does not seem the line in which I can now glorify God. Dinner quiet, and letters afterwards."

"24th. To F.'s to dinner, where G. and others—I had heard just before from Macaulay of his having at a party wrongly condemned my book and religion, and that G. who is just beginning to be earnest, was much disgusted. Alas! it is a pity, yet I wish I had as much love of the Saviour as they have."

"March 4th. Much unpleasant doubting what I ought to do about Madame de Stael. Lady S. tells me that there has been much discussion whether I should go, and wagers laid; but Madame de Stael said she was sure I should come, because I had said I would. What care this shows we should take, because we shall be more closely watched, more strictly judged! I must do away the effect of this in her mind, that she may not think I conceive I may speak conventional falsehoods, the very doctrine and crime of the world, which so represents what it calls lies and the imputation of them.

"10th. I have consented to dine with Madame de Stael; I could not well do otherwise. Bowdler said much to persuade me. Let me try to speak plainly though tenderly to her. 18th. Dined with Madame de Stael—her son and daughter, and two other foreigners, Lord Harrowby, Lord and Lady Lansdown, Sir James Mackintosh. Lord and Lady Granville Leveson were to have dined, but Lady Spencer died that morning. She asked me to name the party. A cheerful, pleasant dinner.—She talking of the final cause of creation—not utility but beauty—did not like Paley—wrote about Rousseau at fifteen, and thought differently at fifty.

Evening, assembly, but I came away at half-past eleven. A brilliant assembly of rank and talent." "The whole scene," was his next day's reflection, "was intoxicating even to me. The fever arising from it is not yet gone off, (half-past 8, A. M.) though opposed by the most serious motives and considerations both last night and this morning. How dangerous then must such scenes (literally of dissipation, dissipating the spirits, the mind, and for a time almost the judgment) be to young people in the hey-day of youth, and life, and spirits! How unfit for those who are to watch unto prayer, to walk soberly, to be sober-minded! Something in my own case may be fairly ascribed to natural high spirits, and I fear, alas! much to vanity, and a good deal to my being unaccustomed to such scenes; yet after allowing for these weaknesses and peculiarities, must not the sobriety of my age, my principles, my guard, (prayer preceding my entering into the enchanted ground,) be fairly considered as abating the effect, so much as that I may be a fair average sample of the effect of such scenes on young people in general of agreeable manners, and at all popular ways and characters? I am sure I durst not often venture into these scenes. Then the seasoning is so high that it would render all quiet domestic pleasures insipid. Even poor Paley used to say, (though I hope jokingly,) 'Who ever talks to his wife?' This showed even in him the danger of being fascinated by social gaiety. O Lord, enable me to view last night's scene in its true colours, and shapes, and essences. I have not time to trace out the draught. May I remember that they and I are accountable, dying creatures, soon to appear at the judgment-seat of Christ, and be asked whether we avoided temptation, and endeavoured to preserve a frame of spirit suited to those who had to work out their salvation with fear and trembling."

"I am now engaged to many parties, yet I must not go on thus. It unfits my mind for private devotions, and makes me too late, steals me from my children, and even from my business, which from my weak health I must do by contrivance. O Lord, guide me; let me not do

any thing contrary to the liberal and social spirit of Thy religion, but let me have wisdom to see what is really required from me, and resolution to perform it. My own soul should doubtless be my first object, and combined with it, my children . . . how much better might I serve them if I cultivated a closer connexion with God ! . . . my business, and doing good to others. I am clear it is right for me to withdraw from the gay and irreligious, though brilliant, society of Madame de Stael and others. I am, I hope, thankful to God that I am not given up to these pleasures. O let me labour that I may not be merely gratifying an indolent spirit by staying away. Let me cultivate a spiritual mind, that if any be really in earnest I may then approximate and show them that I can feel; and oh may God touch their hearts also. How surely is every one who is in earnest useful to others ! Poor Lord G. ! Let me talk with him, and guard him against the deception of being satisfied with the world's religion. Indeed he knows too much for that. But O may I above all pray and strive for a larger measure of softening, warming, quickening grace. Amen."

This calm and self-denying judgment of himself is not a little striking in one, whose past labours and long-settled character would have exempted him in the eyes of the most scrupulous from the necessity of such rules of conduct. Nor was it that any touch of age had damped the exuberance of his younger spirits; and that he withdrew morosely from scenes in which he could not as of old give and experience pleasure. "Mr. Wilberforce," was Madame de Stael's declaration to Sir James Mackintosh, "is the best converser I have met with in this country. I have always heard that he was the most religious, but I now find that he is the wittiest man in England." His social qualities are about this very time thus described by his friend Mr. Harford. "The first time I met Mr. Wilberforce was at the house of his friend, Mr. Henry Thornton. I had heard him speak in the morning, in a crowded meeting, at the anniversary of a public charity, when elevated sentiments and touching appeals, rendered doubly impressive by the fine tones of

his musical voice, had deeply affected the feelings of the auditory. There was a dinner party at Mr. Thornton's, and several of the guests were among the particular friends of Mr. Wilberforce. Mr. Thornton before we sat down to table expressed a hope that he would join us in a few minutes. We had not been long seated when he entered the room with a smiling, animated countenance, and a lively vivacity of movement and manner; exchanging as he advanced kind salutations with his friends, whose faces were lighted up with peculiar pleasure at his presence. From my earliest youth I had been taught to reverence the name of Wilberforce, so that my delight was great to find myself in his company. His manner and address throughout the afternoon were marked by kindness and vivacity, and his style of conversation was brilliant and easy.

“Those who never saw him till within eight or ten years of his decease, when his figure had become a good deal bent and his head depressed upon his chest by the weight of years acting on an extremely delicate frame, cannot easily form a just idea of him at the period to which I now refer. Some tendency to these infirmities, it is true, was already apparent, but the elasticity and spring of his movements, the comparative erectness of his figure, and the glow on his cheek, presented a strong contrast to the decrepitude which gradually stole upon him in his declining years. His frame was at all times extremely spare, and seemed to indicate that the ethereal inhabitant within was burdened with as little as possible of corporeal encumbrances; but from this attenuated frame proceeded a voice of uncommon compass and richness, whose varying and impressive tones, even in common conversation, bespoke the powers of the orator. His eyes, though small, and singularly set, beamed with the expression of acute intelligence, and of comprehension quick as lightning, blended with that of cordial kindness and warmth of heart. A peculiar sweetness and playfulness marked his whole manner. There was not a single handsome feature—there was scarcely one that was not in itself plain; but the mingled emanations of

imagination and intellect, of benevolence and vivacity, diffused over his countenance a sort of sunny radiance, which irresistibly acted as a powerful magnet on the hearts of all who approached him. At this time, and till within a few years of his death, he wore powder; and his dress and appearance were those of a complete gentleman of the old school."

It was with no ordinary interest he watched the progress of the continental wars: looking upon Buonaparte as the "modern scourge of God," he was sure that when the purpose for which he had been raised up was accomplished, he would again be put down, and at length he thought he saw in the capture of Paris by the allied army, the token of his downfall.

In a letter written at this time, he says,

"How wonderful are the events of the last few days! After hearing that Buonaparte had dashed into the rear of the Allies it seemed doubtful what would happen; when suddenly we heard on Tuesday that they were marching on to Paris. Then we hoped the best; but how little expected that to-day, Saturday, we should hear of Buonaparte's accepting the Emperor of Russia's offer, renouncing the throne and agreeing to retire to Elba!" "Have you good authority for believing that Toussaint perished in Elba? If so, and if Buonaparte himself selected it, he is harder-hearted than Shakspeare would have rendered his greatest villains."

To the congratulations of his friend William Hey upon the continental triumph he replies a few days later.

"Near London, April, 1814.

"My dear Sir,

If I had not 'extremely occupied' to plead in my defence, I should feel quite uncomfortable at having been, I had almost said churlishly, irresponsive to your animated call. And I own I have been condemning myself for not echoing back the songs of grateful acknowledgment. Never surely was the hand of the Almighty more strikingly manifested. Had not Buonaparte been abso-

lutely infatuated, he never would have broken off the conferences at Chatillon. I like your verses much, and can imagine my old friend joining in chorus and singing with all his might. I have been thinking how to convey them to the hands of the Regent, but have not yet devised a way. For I have been for some time, till two days ago, a close prisoner from an attack on the lungs, or rather trachea; for which a blister and silence were prescribed to me by Dr. Baillie. I thank God I am much recovered, indeed nearly well again. I am just now extremely occupied, both mind and thoughts, with considering about and taking measures for, effecting a convention among the great powers for the Abolition of the Slave Trade. It would be indeed a glorious termination of the hurricane. But do not talk publicly of this."

"It would be too shocking," he says to Mr. Gisborne, "to restore to Europe the blessings of peace with professions of our reverence for the principles of justice and humanity, and at the same moment to be creating, for so it would really be doing wherever the Slave Trade is extinct, this traffic in the persons of our fellow-creatures. We are much occupied with the grand object of prevailing on all the great European powers to agree to a convention for the general Abolition of the Slave Trade. Oh may God turn the hearts of these men! What a great and blessed close would it be of the twenty-two years' drama!"

His own special part in this effort was to prepare a letter to the Emperor Alexander. "I am about to correspond with a real live emperor," he concludes a letter to Mr. Gisborne, "not merely such a sort of Birmingham emperor as Buonaparte; so admire my condescension, which can bestow all this penmanship upon you." At this he set to work directly, though he found it difficult to rescue from his other occupations the time which it required. "An incessant succession of inferior concerns," he complains, "prevents my doing this really important business. I cannot yet please myself at all;

and I have written to beg Bowdler to try his hand at a head and tail piece at least. Use your influence with him. I cannot keep myself from interruptions." "Though I have as little conception," replied Mr. Bowdler, "how to address an emperor as if he were an inhabitant of the moon, I half had intended to put what occurred to me upon paper, in order that after seeing the failures of other pens, you might be better satisfied with your own. Depend upon it, whatever styles you employ as contributory, if you consult the wise they will insist on your ultimately adopting your own."

This in the end he did, though little able to secure the leisure he desired. "I find myself," he says, "stupid and slow, and not able to move at all to my liking in composition. My mind must be filled and warmed, then I can pour along pretty well. I am like a horse which cannot get into a gallop till it has some space in which to come to its speed; the incessant interruption of little things obstructs my progress. I have been sadly bothered about the French translation, and forced to write so many letters that I could not get to my work till very late." Now however he kept close to it; "writing the foul copy" of his letter as he walked "in his garden;" and even giving to it some of that time which he most reluctantly conceded to any worldly care. "I stay at home to-day, (Sunday, April 17th,) on account of my cold, and I am about after a short prayer for the Divine blessing, to set to work on my letter to the Emperor. I do it as in God's sight. Surely this occupation is pleasing to Him who says, Mercy is better than sacrifice. I can truly say in the presence of the Searcher of hearts, that I do not engage in it from inclination, for the contrary is the truth, but because it is a business which presses greatly in time, and which tends eminently to the glory of God, and the present and eternal happiness of men." Yet on the following Sunday he says, "I will not quit the peculiar duties of the day for my Abolition labours. Though last Sunday I set about them with a real desire to please God, yet it did not answer; my mind felt a weight on it, a constraint which impeded the free and

unfettered movements of the imagination or intellect; and I am sure that this last week I might have saved for that work four times as much time as I assigned to it on Sunday. Therefore, though knowing that God prefers mercy to sacrifice, yet let me in faith give up this day to religious exercises, to strengthening the impression of invisible and divine things by the worship of God, meditation, and reading. I trust He will bless me during the week, and enable me to make up what might seem lost."

He concludes his letter to the Emperor as follows—

"To the Divine blessing I now consign these pages. May that Almighty Being, whose I trust you are, and whom you serve, who has raised you up to be the chief agent in delivering the European continent from the bonds in which, by a mysterious Providence, it had been so long held, render you the honoured instrument of accomplishing in Africa also his purposes of mercy. May you live, sire, to witness the blessed result of your beneficence, in the prevalence throughout those benighted regions of Christian light, and moral improvement, and social comfort; and to hear her sable children, when, in the language of Scripture, 'they spread forth their hands unto God,' call down not temporal only but everlasting blessings on the head of Alexander Emperor of the Russias, as the greatest of their earthly benefactors."

To effect this glorious consummation was now the great object of his life, and the Congress of Vienna offered to his sanguine mind room to hope it might be realized. In his letter to the Emperor, he entered into a detailed statement of the history of the trade in so forcible a manner, that the Emperor charged himself with the care of the cause of Abolition in the Congress. He had also indulged the hope that France might be induced to enter heartily into the arrangement, and Mr. Macaulay went to Paris to promote the cause. He was desirous to retain the colonies which had fallen into the hands of Great Britain, until France should be willing to abolish the Slave Trade. He entered into correspon-

dence with many distinguished Frenchmen on the subject, and among others with Talleyrand, who replied in a letter filled with shallow subterfuges and personal flattery. His disappointment was great, when Lord Castlereagh returned from Paris bringing with him a treaty which restored to France her colonies, with only a vague promise that the Slave Trade should cease in five years. On the 6th of June he enters in his diary, "I staved off yesterday," (Sunday,) "the thoughts of the Abolition arrangements, but to-day they rushed on me, and grieved me deeply." On that evening, when Lord Castlereagh, on his return from Paris, entered the House of Commons, he was received with loud and enthusiastic cheers. "The only voice which remained mute amidst the fervent burst of joy, was that of Mr. Wilberforce. No heart beat more highly than his with patriotic emotions, but this feeling was mastered by another which forbade its utterance." The acclamations therefore were no sooner hushed, amidst which Lord Castlereagh laid on the table a copy of the treaty, than he "opened upon him." "I can assure my noble friend," he exclaimed, "that if I have not been able to concur in the salutations with which he has been welcomed on his return, it is not from any want of personal cordiality, but because seeing him come up to the House bearing the French treaty, and calling to mind the arrangements made in it respecting the Slave Trade, I cannot but conceive that I behold in his hand the death-warrant of a multitude of innocent victims, men, women, and children, whom I had fondly indulged the hope of having myself rescued from destruction. It is not, however, to give vent to the feelings of an overloaded mind, that I have now risen, for in truth my feelings are far too deeply seated for me to be thus eased of them, but I rise chiefly to notice two particulars to which I entreat my noble friend's immediate attention." One of them was the preventing a five years' revival of the Dutch Slave Trade, the other the imposing restrictions upon that of the French. "When I consider," he continued, "the miseries that we are now about to renew, is it possible to regard them without the deepest

emotions of sorrow? Still as all this was known to my noble friend, I will not suppose that he could lightly or without what appeared to him the most imperious and almost irresistible necessity set his hand to such a treaty. For my own part indeed I frankly declare no considerations could have induced me to consent to it." "My noble friend must allow for my extreme regret, if when at length, after a laborious contention of so many years, I had seemed to myself in some degree in possession of the great object of my life,—if then, when the cup is at my lips, it is rudely dashed from them, for a term of years at least, if not for ever."

Amidst these various disappointments, he was not a little "thankful to hear that the Emperor Alexander charged himself with the Abolition in a Congress. He wishes to see me." On the evening of the 10th of June he "received a note summoning" him for one o'clock upon the morrow. "Sunday, 12th. Got up by half-past six, that I might pray to God for a blessing on my interview. Lock—from which to the Emperor. In his waiting-room were several of his nobles—Prince Czartoriski, Prince of Oldenburgh, and others. At length the Emperor who was absent at Messe (Greek Church) returned, with the Princess of Russia, (Oldenburgh,) and I was summoned up-stairs, and soon after into the inner room to the Emperor. He took me by the hand, very cordially, and assured me that he was much interested for my object, and very glad to see me. On my stating my fear that the French would not in fact abolish at the time settled, he replied heartily, 'We must make them;' and then correcting himself, 'we must keep them to it.' I asked leave, before I left him, to write to him, conceiving that any thing I should say would be driven out of his mind by the incessant bustle of his situation. He frankly assented, and told me he should be glad to hear from me and was obliged to me. He shook hands with me cordially. When I was expressing my concern about the treaty, he said, 'What could be done, when your own ambassador gave way?' "

More than once he was summoned by Alexander to con-

versations, in which the Emperor spoke French, and he replied in English. The Duchess of Oldenburgh, and the King of Prussia, alike desired to see and talk with him; and from the latter he received a set of Dresden china, "the only thing," he playfully declared, "I ever got by spouting." But none amongst the band of monarchs and nobles interested him more than Prince Czartoriski, a Polish Prince, formerly Foreign Secretary to the Emperor. "Czartoriski came in and talked to me for an hour or two about his country, and especially our institutions, with a view to their adoption. He seems eager for useful information, and whatever could improve the people. He acquiesced when I lamented the Emperor's being only fêted, and not let alone to see useful things, courts of justice, &c."

Such reflections could not but force themselves upon the mind of calm and rational observers of these brilliant days. "After we had, Hezekiah-like, ostentatiously exhibited our riches," says Mrs. H. More, "our gold and our silver, after having gorged them with banquets, which I hear they disliked, why were they not introduced to something serious besides the Quakers' meeting? I did not dislike to let them witness our own grandeur, and I like to express our respect and admiration for them, but why keep back from them every thing that was useful? They had really little more good to carry home than poor Omai had." He at least was free from this reproach. "Too late," he says, June 30th, "for dinner, because writing about the Bible Society for Czartoriski, and getting for him some Reports of the Society for Bettering the Condition of the Poor." Many years afterwards, almost the last visit Mr. Wilberforce received was from this interesting man, when having resigned Russian greatness to fight the battles of his injured country, he sought the shores of England as an exile and a refugee.

The temper of his own mind indeed was wholly undisturbed by the agitation around him. "How delightful," he says after an evening spent in social intercourse, "to see the love, simple devotedness, and gratitude of the

three ——'s! How it shames my lukewarmness! Lord, forgive and help me, and let the example spur me on to greater diligence."

It is well worth while to trace up to its fountain head, the quiet recollection of his principles amidst the hurry of his public life. Another entry of his Diary will point it out. When most engaged this summer, he says, "I must try what I long ago heard was the rule of Elliot the great upholsterer, who when he came from Bond Street to his villa, always first retired into his closet. I will do it, though but for a short time. It will, with God's blessing, be useful both for self-examination for the past, and seeking God for the future." "I have been keeping too late hours, and hence I have had but a hurried half hour in a morning to myself. Surely the experience of all good men confirms the proposition, that without a due measure of private devotions the soul will grow lean. It is remarkable that at such times my business and worldly concerns have also gone on ill; enforcing on me old Sir M. Hale's remark, which might have been deemed too strong. O Lord, help me. I will try to assign at least an hour in the morning, and when circumstances will permit, the same in the evening, for Scripture reading, private devotion, and meditation. How little can I now realize the circle of angels and unseen spirits! Yet I hope I can truly say I allow not my corruptions. O Lord, strengthen my faith, send the Spirit of Thy Son into my heart, that I may call Thee Father, and set my affections upon things above."

At the end of July he left London, to devote the quiet of the summer to his great design. All his hopes hung on the result of the approaching Congress. It was therefore of the utmost moment to give to the public mind on the continent the same impulse which it had received in England. He had already tried through Cardinal Gonsalvi, to influence the Romish Conclave, and he now opened a correspondence with a number of literati, Alexander Humboldt, Sismondi, Chateaubriand, and Madame de Staël, in the hope that he might act through them upon their countrymen. He was himself preparing

his chief effort, a printed letter to Talleyrand, which was to contain the strength of the Abolition cause, and to be dispersed as the manifesto of its supporters. "How time flies away!" he writes. "For a third time we are now all collected at Sandgate, enjoying wherever we are the overflowing bounty of the Almighty. The quiet of this place, so great a contrast to the bustle of my London life, produces a general sleepiness and stupefaction, which almost disqualify me for all active employment of my mental faculties. I must try to rouse and lash myself into something like animation; but I can truly declare that I wish the office of writing a piece for general circulation devolved on a more able hand. I will do my best however, after having executed two or three lesser duties which require immediate attention. I mean to write to the Emperor of Russia and the King of Prussia, and a private letter to Talleyrand. I hope herewith to transmit one to Chateaubriand. You know probably that Lord Castlereagh charged himself with communicating with the Pope. Have you seen the article in the Edinburgh Review on the Revival of the Slave Trade? I do not think it quite fair, and any statements which can justly be pronounced unfair, are always in the end injurious as well as unjust."

The want of books, and a wish to be near Peltier, the translator of his work, obliged him at length to return to London. This was no inconsiderable sacrifice. He loved to spend his summer holidays in the retirement of the country surrounded by his children; with whom he had "begun walking, and examining them in walks in the books which they are reading, and talking them over together." While "in the evening," almost the greatest of their treats, he was "reading to them Shakspeare." Occasionally, too, he made excursions with them for the day; and in "Cæsar's camp and the cherry orchards" all the burden of his business was thrown off, and he was the most cheerful of the party. "We took our dinner with us upon Saturday," is the description of such a day this summer in the letter of a guest, "and were fourteen in number. Mr. Wilberforce made us all very happy.

He read, and talked, and carved, and reminded us of the benevolence of God in making the avenues of innocent pleasure so numerous, and forming us for so many enjoyments which have nothing sinful in them." "There is no way," is his own remark on this day, "in which children's tempers are more indicated than in such excursions." With the same watchfulness for their advantage he now tells Mr. Macaulay, that though "at first disposed at once to cut his cables and slip off for London," he had postponed his journey "until Monday, because I am to take —— with me on his way to school, and I like to make Sunday his last day at home. I think it tends to associate religion and domestic tenderness; to identify them with each other, and thereby augment both."

He continued his work at Battersea Rise, where he was a guest in the house which he had inhabited so many years before. He had left Sandgate, hoping only to be kept a few days near London, but the claims of business multiplied upon him. On the 2d of September he tells Mrs. Wilberforce, "My anticipations are verified. I am forced to stay three or four days longer, I trust not more. The interests at stake are so prodigious that even the probability of advancing them constitutes an object of vast amount. What a comfort it is that my absence from you and our dear children is not when I am engaged in the work, however necessary for self-defence, and therefore justifiable, of blood and tears—making others miserable while endeavouring to secure our own happiness; but on the contrary, in the work of mercy and love; a work which may truly be said to breathe the same spirit as that of Him whose coming was announced as 'peace on earth, and good-will towards men!' Ay, and surely we need not leave out the most honourable part of the service, 'Glory to God in the highest.' For I am occupied, I trust, in preparing an entrance into Africa for the gospel of Christ. I must say that I account it one of the greatest of the many and great mercies and favours of the Almighty, (oh how many and how great!) that his providence connected me with

this good cause. I might have been occupied as honestly, but in ways, political ways for instance, in which the right path was doubtful."

He touches here upon a secret spring which led to many of his Abolition efforts. "I greatly fear," he tells Mr. Stephen, "if Hayti grants to France a colonial monopoly in return for the recognition of its independence, that all commerce with us will be excluded, and with it our best hopes of introducing true religion into the island. Now I frankly own to you to introduce religion appears to me the greatest of all benefits. I blame myself for not having earlier stated to you my feelings on this head. It has arisen from want of reflection, for my principles have always been the same. God grant we may not hinder the gospel of Christ. O remember that the salvation of one soul is of more worth than the mere temporal happiness of thousands or even millions. In this I well know you agree with me entirely."

CHAPTER VII.

Private Usefulness—Death of H. Thornton and J. Bowdler—Corn Law Riots—Battle of Waterloo—Intercourse with Prince Regent.

THERE was nothing more remarkable about him than the cheerful spring of his natural affections, even under the heaviest pressure of perplexing business. "There," he said when hurried once almost beyond bearing, calling the attention of a friend to a sudden burst of voices, "how can I be worried by such trifles, when I have such constant remembrancers of God's goodness to me?" It was his children playing over head with a noisy glee which would have jarred upon the feelings of almost any one besides himself. Thus amidst his present business he rescued time enough to write to his second son.

" Battersea Rise, Sept. 14, 1814.

" My very dear —,

I do not relish the idea that you are the only one of my children who has not written to me during my absence, and that you should be the only one to whom I should not write: I therefore take up my pen though but for a very few moments, to assure you that I do not suspect your silence to have arisen from the want of affection for me, any more than that which I myself have hitherto observed has proceeded from this source. There is a certain demon called procrastination, who inhabits a castle in the air at Sandgate, as well as at so many other places, and I suspect that you have been carried up some day, (at the tail of your kite perhaps,) and lodged in that same habitation, which has fine large rooms in it from which there are beautiful prospects in all directions; and probably you will not quit a dwelling-place that you like so well, till you hear that I am on my way to Sandgate. You would meet the 'to-morrow man' there, (it just occurs to me,) and I hope you will have prevailed upon him to tell you the remainder of that pleasant story, a part of which Miss Edgeworth has related, though I greatly fear he would still partake so far of the spirit of the place as to leave a part untold till —to-morrow. But I am trifling sadly, since I am this morning unusually pressed for time. I will therefore only guard my dear boy seriously against procrastination, one of the most dangerous assailants of usefulness, and assure him that I am to-day, to-morrow, and always while I exist,

His affectionate Father,

W. WILBERFORCE."

It is not a little interesting to turn from public objects which consumed so much of his time and attention to the details of his private life. He soon returned to Sandgate, living in the midst of his children, studying the Scriptures daily with some of them, "walking and reading with them all, and bringing them into the habits

he desired by kind, not violent means." He was as busy too doing good to those around him, as if his sympathies had never wandered from his own immediate circle; entering eagerly into any individual tale of suffering—as when he "heard" this year of a case, ("the shocking account of Mrs. R.'s cruelty to her child,") which he took up and carried through, at a great expense of time and trouble, and in spite of repeated threatenings of personal violence from the brutal parent—and labouring too by schools and other institutions to relieve the want and ignorance around him. "The adult school," wrote a friend staying at this time in his family to Mr. Arthur Young, "is established here; a room and teachers provided, and all will be left in good train. Mr. Wilberforce went himself, read them extracts from Pole's History of Adult Schools, and made them a little speech, saying how much he respected their good sense for coming. You would have been delighted with seeing him seated by the old ladies, with the utmost patience, kindness, and humility, fairly teaching them their letters, and quite unconscious that it was at all more remarkable in him than in any common person. This was beautiful in him, and highly useful and encouraging in its effects upon the institution."

It is no wonder that thus causing and enjoying the present social happiness, he should have "felt melancholy at the idea of breaking up and going to town." But the session was about to open, and duty called him up to London.

"We have seen much of Wilberforce," Mr. Henry Thornton tells Hannah More, "and heard his letters from many of the renowned of the earth, all seeming to pay homage to him. Lord Castlereagh tells him that he has obeyed his commands, and put his book into the hands of each of the Sovereigns. Talleyrand's last letter has rather a clearer acknowledgment than before of his sympathy with Wilberforce, as to the grand object. The most happy part of the intelligence, is an official assurance of an 'ordonnance' of some sort issued recently by the French government, excluding French

slavetraders from all the northern parts of Africa; and the line is so drawn that Sierra Leone, and all the settlements restored by the treaty with France, as well as a very large district below Sierra Leone, are exempt from their molestations. I almost anticipate more good from these new efforts of our friends than even from the Abolition voted here; and the name of Wilberforce has attained new celebrity, and his character and general opinions a degree of weight, which perhaps no private individual not invested with office ever possessed. My delight has consisted much in observing his Christian simplicity, and the general uniformity in his character and conduct, amidst the multitude of compliments from the great, made, on the part of some, with much feeling. He is indeed in his usual bustle, but he reminds me nevertheless of that saying which was applied to Fox, that the greatest objects, or the most heavy load of business, seemed never to put him into that petty tumult which is the common mark of inferior men."

The hostile feelings of the French ministers were now however abated. They even attempted to abridge the exemption promised to northern Africa by making Cape Three Points its southern limits, thus opening the Bight of Benin to the Slave Trade.

The measures, however, which Louis XVIII. either would not or could not carry, were now about to be accomplished by a stronger hand. From his rock of Elba, Buonaparte had not been an unobservant witness of the feelings of this country, which he now probably for the first time believed to be sincere. Upon his sudden return to power, he attempted to ingratiate himself with England by proclaiming a total and immediate Abolition of the Slave Trade. Thus was the bloody cup dashed from the hands of France, and the scourge of Europe became the pacificator of Africa. And when Louis was again restored by British arms, he was not suffered to revive the hateful traffic. "I have the gratification of acquainting you," writes Lord Castlereagh, "that the long desired object is accomplished, and that the present messenger carries to Lord Liverpool the unqualified and

total Abolition of the Slave Trade throughout the dominions of France. I must beg to refer you to his Lordship for the terms in which this has been effected ; but I feel great satisfaction in persuading myself that, as they will leave you nothing to desire on the subject, so you will trace in them the undeviating and earnest exertions of the Prince Regent's ministers to effectuate this great object, which had been so impressively given them in charge."

Mr. Wilberforce had been long accustomed to make the opening of a new year a time for serious and devotional reflection. After morning service, on Sunday, Jan. 1st, (1815,) "I was much affected," is his entry, "O may it be permanently, by the reflections the seasons suggest. Read in the evening a sermon on the fig-tree a cumberer of the ground to my family." He was now occupying Barham Court, and partaking of the holyday employments of his children.

Mr. Thornton was at this time occupying his house at Kensington Gore, to be nearer medical advice. His health, which was at no time robust, had been much weakened by a fit of illness in the autumn; but it was hoped that he was rallying from it, and no apprehensions were expressed of its ultimate result. On the 9th of January Mr. Wilberforce was "so busy with" "his letters" that "he could hardly find time" to leave the country; "but it would be unkind not to go to town for Henry's sake, if, as they think, I could be any comfort to him." The next day therefore he went up "to Kensington Gore, but did not see dear Henry till the next morning for fear of flurrying him." He had come to town with no idea that his friend was in any danger, and was "shocked" therefore "to hear" when he "saw Halford early the next morning, that a sad change had taken place within the last five or six days; inflammation going towards the heart, and the greatest danger. I ordered myself to be refused to all put particular friends. Dealtry and I up praying with Henry and Mrs. and Miss Thornton."

"My mind," he tells a friend at the conclusion of a

business letter, "is in reality engrossed all this time by a different subject, and I scarcely need tell you that it is the loss of one of my oldest, kindest, most intimate, and most valuable friends. His death is indeed a loss, though so much more so to poor Mrs. Henry Thornton than to any of us, that all comparison is at an end. However the old, well-worn consolation is not worn out, our loss is his gain, and we should indeed be selfish if we could even wish to call our friend back to inhabit once more an emaciated, suffering body, from the far different scene on which he has now entered. I knew my deceased friend well, and I can truly say, after living in the same house with him for several years, and on terms of the closest intimacy and the most unreserved and uninterrupted society for eighteen or nineteen subsequently, that a more upright character I never knew—taking the word in the largest sense, as expressing the fulfilment of every duty, and the cultivation of every Christian grace and moral virtue on right principles. To me who was used to consult with him on all public questions, and who profited so often from the extraordinary superiority of his understanding, the loss is almost irreparable. But it is the will of the Almighty, and it becomes us to submit. It is the ordination of infinite wisdom and goodness, and it becomes us to say, Thy will be done. I will not apologize for the serious strain of my letter, because I am persuaded you would wish me to pour forth of the fulness of my heart."

Another blow soon followed. There was not perhaps any one amongst his younger friends whom he loved and respected as he did John Bowdler. "I loved him so warmly," he says when four busy years with all their obliterating influences had passed by since his death, "that it quite delights me to find him estimated at his true value. If poor Kirke White had lived he might have grown into something of the same kind. But Bowdler had a dignity—he would have become capable I assure you of thundering and lightening. And then he was the tenderest, and the humblest, and the most self-forgetting creature." Bowdler too had just been mourning with him. On the sorrowful day which followed

Henry Thornton's death, Mrs. Thornton had "sent for him. He came in the evening, and I had much talk with him. I took him to town next morning." It was the last time they met on earth. The very next day "about one in the morning dear Bowdler burst a blood-vessel, and until about seven, when his bed-maker came in, he lay in his chambers, humanly speaking in the most desolate state. Yet he told C. afterwards that his mind was then so filled with the Saviour that he thought of nothing else." Such was the colour of his thoughts for the ten following days, during which he meekly bore the sudden breaking up of the strongest natural affections, and the highest intellectual powers. Upon the 31st of January, he was pronounced "better, the inflammation of the lungs subdued, and its conquest thought a great point." Yet on the following evening, when Mrs. Henry Thornton's business had again carried Mr. Wilberforce to town, "a note came to" him at seven, "telling me of dear Bowdler's death at twelve o'clock this morning. Oh how little did I foresee, when we met lately at Kensington Gore, that it would be the last time of my intercourse with him on earth! O sit anima mea cum Bowdlero. I went on to Grosvenor Square, and saw his lifeless and ghastly frame."

To Hannah More a few days later he pours out his heart.

"London, Feb. 11, 1815.

"My dear Friend,

Scarcely had a week passed away after the death of our dear friend Henry Thornton, before the excellent and elevated Bowdler was called out of this world, only less dear a friend as of more recent acquisition; and scarcely had we returned from his funeral, . . though there also I speak figuratively, because I was unable to attend from the continuance of the same indisposition which kept me from joining in the same sad office to my earlier friend, . . when the tidings arrive of the departure of Dr. Buchanan. How striking! We are all involuntarily looking round and asking with an inquiring eye, Who next, Lord? Oh may the warnings have their

due effect in rendering us fit for the summons. But I at this moment recollect some important and urgent claims on my time (too little for them) before I must go out of town, and I must therefore break off unwillingly, for my stream of thought was in full flow, and it beats against the barrier. Kindest remembrances. Farewell. I enclose the half of a bank note; the remainder shall follow.

Yours ever most sincerely,
W. WILBERFORCE."

These deep tones of manly affection are strikingly contrasted with his lowly estimation of himself. On Sunday, Feb. 12th, he was at Battersea Rise and received the "Sacrament. Mrs. H. Thornton stayed for the first time since her husband's death, and was much affected. Indeed, so hard a creature as myself was so. What letters did I see yesterday, one quite exquisite from M. How wonderfully the power of true Christianity is displayed in the tempers, feelings, and even reflections of the several sufferers! Harford, one of them, having lost a beloved father, indicated the same blessed sentiments and feelings." To this friend he wrote two days later.

TO J. S. HARFORD, ESQ.

"Kensington Gore, Feb. 14, 1815.

"My dear Sir,

Even by those who think and feel concerning the events of this chequered life as real Christians, such an incident as the death of a parent, or even of a near and dear friend, will be felt severely; and indeed it ought to be so felt, for here, as in so many other instances, it is the glorious privilege of Christianity and the evidence of its superior excellence, that it does not, like the systems of human fabrication, strive to extinguish our natural feelings, from a consciousness that it is only by lessening them that it can deal with them, if I may so express myself, and enable us to bear the misfortune as we ought, but it so softens, and sweetens, and increases the sensibility of our

hearts, as to make us love our friends better and feel more keenly for the whole of this life the loss of our former delightful intercourse with them, and yet at the same time it so spiritualizes and elevates our minds as to cheer us amidst all our sorrows; and enabling us, on these as on other occasions, to walk by faith and live by the Spirit, it raises us to the level of our ascended friends, till we hear almost their first song of exultation, and would not even wish to interrupt it, while we rather indulge the humble hope of one day joining in the chorus.

Yet the loss of so excellent a man as Bowdler, at what seemed to us so premature a period, when we might have hoped that for so many succeeding years the world would be instructed by his wisdom and charmed by his eloquence, and above all, edified and improved by his example, must be deeply felt by the survivors. And even in the case of Mr. Henry Thornton, I at least may naturally feel this who was of the same age; much it might be hoped still remained for him to do for the benefit of his fellow-creatures and the glory of God. And Buchanan too! but, I am silent. . . .”

The general question of the effects of Abolition about this time engrossed his attention. The Abolition party were upon the eve of taking an important step in their great struggle. Their objects had been all along strictly practical; they contended for no abstract principles; they did not enforce the natural rights of man; but they saw a great system of iniquity and wrong, which called aloud to Heaven for redress: The abolition of the Trade in Slaves was the first remedy for the evil. It was hoped that it would at the same time staunch the wounds of Africa, save the present victims of the trade, and insure the kind and Christian treatment of the actual stock of slaves. Seven years had now passed, and there was yet no visible improvement in this respect. Efforts had been made to effect it by private and inoffensive means, but in vain. Some of the more eager partizans could scarcely be kept within these limits, but Mr. Wilberforce would not listen to the more violent counsels of his coadjutors in the great work of Abolition. “You,” he tells Mr. Stephen, “are full ten degrees above

me." He was resolved in the first instance to strengthen the ameliorating influence of the Act of Abolition, by preventing the illicit introduction of fresh labourers. Thus the Bill for a Register of Negroes, which he at this time introduced in order to prevent illicit traffic in slaves, was the first move in this new conflict; and yet in this mildest and most necessary step the principle of all his latter conduct was in fact involved. For it was in truth the appeal of the slave population from the narrow-minded island legislatures to the supreme council of the empire; from the corrupted currents of Jamaica and Barbadoes to English sympathy and moral feeling. It led therefore to every after-effort for the mitigation of their sufferings; and when all these had been tried in vain, it led step by step to the great principle of entire emancipation. But he and others around him saw not as yet to what they should be led. They had never acted upon the claim of abstract rights; and they reached emancipation at last only because it was the necessary conclusion of a series of practical improvements. "They looked," says Mr. Stephen, "to an emancipation of which not the slaves, but the masters themselves should be the willing authors."

The energy and decision of his character was exhibited strikingly during the period at which the public discontent ran so high on the question of Corn Laws, some extracts from his Diary will illustrate at one view the excitement of the times and his own feelings on the occasion. "March 6th. House. Corn Bill in committee—sad rioting at night. Both doors of the carriage, which set down members, opened, and member pulled out. None much injured. 8th. House—Report of Corn Bill, and tendency to riot. 9th. House. Some mobbing, and people savage and inveterate—alas! alas! Charles Grant, and Mr. Arthur Young, the agriculturist, slept with us for security on Tuesday." Mr. Young was now entirely blind, and found his chief pleasure in such society as that which he continually found in Mr. Wilberforce's house. "He says that in his present state of Egyptian darkness, Kensington Gore is still like the land of Goshen to him; and that while he has the hope of

hearing Mr. Wilberforce's voice, he will not say that he finds 'in change of place, no change of scene.'"

"At my prayers this morning," his Diary continues, "March 10th, I reflected seriously if it was not my duty to declare my opinions in favour of the Corn Bill, on the principle of providing things honest in the sight of all men, and adorning the doctrine of God my Saviour in all things. I decided to do it. I see people wonder I do not speak one way or the other. It will be said, he professes to trust in God's protection, but he would not venture any thing. Then I shall have religious questions and moral questions, to which my speaking will conciliate, and contra, my silence strongly indispose men. Besides, it is only fair to the government, when I really think them right, to say so, as an independent man not liable to the imputation of party bias, corrupt agreement with landed interest, &c.; so I prepared this morning and spoke, and though I lost my notes, and forgot much I meant to say, I gave satisfaction." "I am sure that in coming forward, I performed a very painful act of duty, from a desire to please God, and to serve the interests of religion, and I humbly trust God will protect me and my house and family. If not, His will be done." "Sir Joseph Banks's house sadly treated; all his papers burnt, and his house nearly being so."

A letter to his eldest son, now seventeen years old, enters into more particulars.

"London, March 15, 1815.

"My very dear W.

I do not recollect with any precision when I last wrote to you, but my feelings have been for some days intimating to me that it is long, too long, since we either of us heard from the other, and therefore I gladly avail myself of a leisure half hour, which I enjoy in consequence of Mr. Whitbread's, or rather of Lord Castle-reagh's, business being put off, to despatch a letter to Aspeden.

You did not mention, I think, the subject of your declamation—I wish you had, and shall be glad if you will

name it in your next letter to me or your mother. What are the speculations of the Aspeden politicians on the escape of Buonaparte? We old hands are, if we would confess it, as much at a loss as you what predictions to utter. In short, I for one, have learnt from experience to be very diffident in my speculations on future events. It is however an unspeakable comfort in such circumstances to be assured that able, and active, and wicked as Buonaparte is, he is no less under the Divine control than the weakest of human beings. He is executing, unconsciously, the Divine will; and it is probably because the sufferings which he before brought upon the nations of Europe did not produce the intended effect of humiliation and reformation, that he is allowed once more to stalk abroad and increase the sum of human misery.

Were you to enter the dining-room at family prayer time without having received some explanation of our appearance, you would probably begin to think that we were expecting a visit from the ex-emperor and his followers at Kensington Gore, and had prepared a military force to repel his assault. For you would see four soldiers and a sergeant, together with another stranger, who as far as bodily strength would go, would play his part as well as any of them. The fact is, that we had some reason to apprehend mischief for our house, in consequence of the part which I judged it my duty to take on the Corn Bill; and as your mother, &c. was advised to evacuate the place, I preferred the expedient which had been adopted by Mr. Bankes, and several others of my friends, that of having four or five soldiers in my house—the very knowledge of their being there, rendering an attack improbable. But it was a curious instance of the rapid circulation of intelligence, that at Covent Garden market early on Saturday morning, John Sharman, who sells garden-stuff, being there to purchase for the supply of his shop was hooted after, with ‘So your old master has spoken for the Corn Bill,’ (I had spoken only the night before,) ‘but his house shall pay for it.’ All however is hitherto quiet, and I trust will continue so.

But I was aware of the danger when (to you I may say, it was at my prayers) I resolved to speak for the Bill ; but I judged it my duty to show that I was in favour of the measure ; (though thinking 76s. a preferable importation price to 80s.) I thought that if I remained silent, many might say Mr. Wilberforce professes to trust in the protection of God, but you see when there is danger to be apprehended from speaking out, he takes care to protect himself by being silent. Again, I sometimes need parliamentary support for measures of a class not so popular as some others, as missionary questions, or any others of a religious kind. Now by coming forward and speaking my mind on the present occasion, I knew I should render people better disposed to support me in any of these cases, while on the other hand my remaining silent and snug as it might have been termed, would have produced a contrary disposition. I acted in short on the principle of ‘ providing things honest in the sight of all men, and of adorning the doctrine of God our Saviour.’ But observe, I was clear in my judgment in favour of the Bill.

I did not intend to give you this long history. And as I have expended all my own time, and have trespassed on yours, I must hasten to a conclusion, not, however, without a few words to assure my dear —— how often I think of him, how often pray for him. O my dearest boy, let me earnestly conjure you not to be seduced into neglecting, curtailing, or hurrying over your morning prayers. Of all things guard against neglecting God in the closet. There is nothing more fatal to the life and power of religion ; nothing which makes God more certainly withdraw His grace. Farewell, my beloved ——, my first-born : and O my dearest boy, bear in mind what a source either of joy or sorrow you will be to your affectionate mother, and

Your affectionate Father and Friend,

W. WILBERFORCE.

P. S. Kind remembrances to any young friends that I know.”

His Journal continues on the 14th of March ; “ All

quite quiet here, but sad accounts from France; Buona-
parte having got to Lyons, and Horner anticipating the
worst. The soldiers (Scotch) behave extremely well;
they come into prayers, and pleased to do so."

In the midst of much daily business, encountered with
the utmost diligence, comes in the result of a Sunday's
self-examination. "April 10th. I humbly hope that I en-
joyed yesterday more of a Christian feeling of faith,
and hope, and love, than of late. But I have been to
blame in point of hours. Lord, forgive my past unpro-
fitableness, and enable me to mend in future. 21st.
Being unwell, I kept the house, but busy on letters, and
chiefly African Institution Report; and occupied evening.
Committee on Lascars' business called just when dinner
going on table. I too faint, and, alas, impatient, forget-
ting Christ's talking with the woman of Samaria, and
neglecting the solicitations of hunger, and the distress of
faintness."

"May 3d. Anniversary of Bible Society. It went off
well. Robert Grant spoke beautifully. I was well re-
ceived, but very moderate in real performance. As I
came out, a truly pleasing Quaker accosted me, and
with the true *friends'* frankness and kindness, without
any thing of forwardness and vulgarity, asked me con-
cerning peace or war 'having been much exercised
about conferring with me' on that topic, wishing me 'to
become a fool that I might be wise,' &c. I walked with
him some time, and was affected to tears. 10th. Early
to see Lords Castlereagh and Liverpool about Abolition
and St. Domingo. Castlereagh clear that the Bourbon
government will never revive the Trade. I hear every-
where that the Duke of Wellington is in high spirits. I
am distressed and puzzled about politics; but surely
without being clear it would not be right to oppose the
government. If Buonaparte could be unhorsed, it would,
humanly speaking, be a blessing to the European world;
indeed to all nations. And government ought to know
both his force and their own. Yet I greatly dread their
being deceived, remembering how Pitt was. 29th.
Wordsworth the poet breakfasted with us, and walked

garden—and it being the first time, stayed long—much pleased with him.”

“June 1st. A report to-day from Brussels that it is still said there will be no fighting; Buonaparte will retire—surely there is no ground for this idea. 7th. House. Notice about Register Bill. 8th. Duke of Gloucester’s on Registry Bill—Lords Grenville and Lansdown, Romilly, Calthorpe, Horner, William Smith, Stephen, Babington, and Macaulay. I against bringing on the measure this year. But Grenville strongly for it, and all the rest gave way. 9th. First quiet thought of the plan of my speech for Tuesday. Then African Institution, Captured Negroes’ committee. Then House. Dined Sir G. Beaumont’s to meet Wordsworth, who very manly, sensible, and full of knowledge, but independent almost to rudeness. 12th. Off early to Stephen’s, Chelsea, to prepare for motion; any quiet time here being next to impossible. 13th. Busy preparing all morning; but not having settled plan of speech before, much less finishings, I felt no confidence. Got through pretty well, speaking an hour and fifty minutes.”

Sunday, the 18th, was spent at the parsonage of Taplow, where his family had been staying for a week. It is described in his Diary as “a quiet day.” Above measure did he enjoy its quietness. He seemed to shake off with delight the dust and bustle of the crowded city; and as he walked up the rising street of the village on his way to the old church of Taplow, he called on all around to rejoice with him in the visible goodness of his God; and “perhaps,” he said to his children, “at this very moment when we are walking thus in peace together to the house of God, our brave fellows may be fighting hard in Belgium. O how grateful should we be for all God’s goodness to us!” the next day he “returned to London for Lord Roseberry’s Divorce Bill, religionis causâ;” and almost the first news which met him showed that his grateful reflections on the Sunday had been uttered whilst the battle of Waterloo was being fought. “22d. Dr. Wellesley came and told us of the Duke of Wellington’s splendid victory of the 18th.” “A dreadful

battle," he writes word to Taplow. "British victorious; but great loss. Duke of Brunswick and Lord Errol's eldest son killed. We are said to have lost 25,000, the French 50,000. Oh my heart sickens at the scene! Yet praise God for this wonderful victory."

On Saturday, the 24th, he again plunged into the country, but hastened back upon the Monday, for "the Duke of Wellington's reward; I preferring infinitely a palace to be built to buying one ready made. 28th. Breakfasters again—Sanders, a black man—Spanish, Blanco White; yesterday Prince Blucher's aide-de-camp who had brought the despatches—desired by Blucher several times over to let me know all that passed." "Did Marshal Blucher," he was asked at his audience by the Regent, "give you any other charge?" "Yes, sir; he charged me to acquaint Mr. Wilberforce with all that had passed." "Go to him then yourself by all means," was the Prince's answer, "you will be delighted with him." The veteran soldier's lively recollection of the efforts made in the preceding year to succour his afflicted countrymen is highly to his honour. "I have fought," he wrote to the managing committee, "two pitched battles, five engagements, masked three fortresses, taken two; but I have lost 22,000 men. Will the people of England be satisfied with me now? Desire Mr. Wilberforce to bestir himself." Though he had lately lamented his forgetfulness, and begged a friend "to act always as his flapper," he needed in truth no such assistance. He took at this time the leading part in another meeting for the Germans, and in the midst of his busiest preparations for the introduction of his Registry Bill he "came back and took the chair at a private meeting of the neighbours, for a fund, raising for the widows and children of the killed and wounded of the 1st Life Guards always quartered at Knightsbridge—a small meeting, but cordial."

A grateful remembrance of the gallant services of our soldiers and our sailors was deeply wrought into his mind, and appeared often in his conversation; as when he said to a friend, "I never see a soldier or a sailor

without a mingled feeling of gratitude and compassion. I think of the privations they suffer, and of the dangers, moral as well as physical, to which they are exposed in our defence, whilst we are comfortably at home by our firesides, enjoying freely our domestic blessings and our Christian advantages." Or when at another time the conversation turned upon the beauties of our English villas. "I must speak," he said, "of the comfort and security of English cottages. It is delightful to think how many there are in this country who though having no title to personal security from the extent or importance of their possessions, are so completely guarded in their little nooks and tenements by the power of the law, that they can enjoy undisturbed every comfort of life as securely as the first peer in the land. I delight to see, as one sometimes does, an old worn-out sailor—poor fellow! seated in his queer boat-like summer-house, smoking his pipe, and enjoying himself in a state of the most happy independence."

The session was now drawing to a close. On the 5th of July the Registry Bill was introduced by Mr. Wilberforce, and read a first time. It had for some time been determined to carry it no further till another session. On the 6th, and more fully on the 7th, he was "shocked to hear of Whitbread's death—having destroyed himself. It must have been insanity, as the jury immediately found it. Oh how little are we duly thankful for being kept from such catastrophes! Doubtless the devil's instigation." "The newspapers," he writes on the same day to Zachary Macaulay, "will state to you the dreadful end of poor Whitbread. I need not say how much the event has shocked me. There can be no doubt of insanity having been the cause, and from what is said the impulse must have been sudden. Are not such acts most probably to be referred to the evil spirit's operation?" He found some slight alleviation of these painful feelings, in bearing witness on the 11th, when a new writ for Bedford town was moved for, "in a few words which I found pleased his friends," to the thoroughly English character of this rugged but manly statesman. What a beautiful evidence of the "charity which filled his heart—the

same Whitbread who a few weeks previously had "reproached him ill-naturedly" in the House with being ungrateful.

After a tour through some of the southern and western counties for the gratification of his eldest son, he settled with his family at Brighton, not only for the benefit of his own health, but of that of Mrs. Henry Thornton, who died during his sojourn there. His Diary mentions his "reading and praying" with her, and ultimately her death in a state of "sober triumph." During his separation from his family, which he left at Brighton, while he attended the body of his friend to London, he writes to them as follows. "I will use my pen no more than to express what however I express much more at large on my knees, my earnest wishes that God's best blessings may be ever strewed abundantly upon you all. Oh! how blessed will be that day, when after all our conflicts and anxieties we shall be made partakers of that rest which remaineth for the people of God! Oh let us all strive lest a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of us should seem to come short of it. But if we give diligence to make our calling and election sure, we never shall, we never can fail, for the promises of the God of truth are the pledges of our security. But let us all remember that if we would be admitted hereafter into heaven we must be made meet for it here. That striking passage in the 8th of Romans quite haunts me—'If any man have not the spirit of Christ he is none of His.' Oh let this thought quicken our endeavours and our prayers."

On the 14th of November he returned to Brighton, and to business, for he complains, "I cannot even read during the day all the letters which the morning's post has heaped upon me: twice within the last few days I have had five or six packets beyond my number."

In the midst of these over-occupations, he perceived with no great pleasure a new feature of resemblance added to "Piccadilly by the sea-side," in the presence of the Prince Regent, and the consequent claims of the court and society upon his straitened time. "I at the

Pavilion once. The ministers have been down with the Prince for two or three days each. Lord Sidmouth and Bathurst called on me yesterday. Lord Castlereagh before." "The Prince and Duke of Clarence too very civil. Prince showed he had read Cobbett. Spoke strongly of the blasphemy of his late papers, and most justly. I was asked again last night and to-night; but declined, not being well." This excuse however would not long serve, and three days afterwards he was again "at the Pavilion—the Prince came up to me and reminded me of my singing at the Duchess of Devonshire's ball in 1782, of the particular song, and of our then first knowing each other." "We are both I trust much altered since, sir," was his answer. "Yes, the time which has gone by must have made a great alteration in us." "Something better than that too, I trust, sir." "He then asked me to dine with him the next day, assuring me that I should hear nothing in his house to give me pain, . . . alluding to a rash expression of one of his train, when I declined the other day—'Mr. Wilberforce will not dine with you, sir,' . . . that even if there should be at another time, there should not be when I was there. At dinner I sat between Lord Ellenborough and Sir James Graham. The Prince desired I might be brought forward."

"At night in coming away I opened to Bloomfield, very civilly as I am sure I ought, saying I felt the Prince's kindness, but told him that it was inconvenient to me to come to the Pavilion often—children causâ. He at once said, I understand you. When I next saw the Prince, he gave me a kind and general invitation. I heard afterwards that Lord Ellenborough was asked to Pavilion expressly to meet me. I was glad to hear it, as indicating that I was deemed particular as to my company." Several times in the ensuing week he was again a guest at the Pavilion, and met always with the same treatment. "The Prince is quite the English gentleman at the head of his own table." "I was consulted by the queen's desire, whether proper to keep the queen's birth-day, which fell on the thanksgiving-day. I replied that not

wrong, but rather doubtful. I went myself, being forced to obey the sergeant and summons, otherwise should have deemed it for me ineligible, and therefore wrong."

"No, my dear Stephen," he wrote in reply to the playful taunt, "you will live to be a peer at last," "I am not afraid of declaring that I shall go out of the world plain William Wilberforce. In one view indeed I seldom have had less reason to be dissatisfied with that less dignified style: I mean in the degree of civility or even respect to which even plain W. W. may be deemed entitled. For really had I been covered with titles and ribbons, I could not have been treated with more real, unaffected, unapparently condescending, and therefore more unostentatious civility. But, alas! still better reasons suggest the same dispositions. I become more and more impressed with the truth of good old Baxter's declaration, that 'the great and the rich of this world are much to be pitied;' and I am continually thankful for not having been led to obtain a station which would have placed my children in circumstances of greatly increased danger."

On the first Sunday after his return to London, he says, "I am fresh from Brighton, a place much to be avoided in the winter except for some special purposes—wishing to see the Prince, or some other persons, whom one would meet only there. It must be a bad place for the generality of young women; infusing a pleasure-loving, dissipated spirit. How different this from crucifying the flesh with the affections and lusts, and making no preparation for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof! How ill-suited to the baptismal engagement to resist the pomps and vanities of this wicked world! I find it steals on myself though so advanced in years."

With him and his meanwhile, the year had closed with thoughts of soberness and prayer. "What a change has a single year and less made in the circle of my acquaintance! Mr. Henry Thornton and his widow, and their excellent young friend and mine, Mr. Bowdler, who was carried off just when he was about to be married to the daughter of another friend. Mrs. Henry Thornton dying

at this place, it was my privilege to be much with her in her latter days, and a more peaceful, humble, grateful, hopeful death I cannot conceive. 'I trust,' she said a few days before her decease, 'God is gently leading me to that blessed world which He has prepared for those that love Him.' I thank God we are well. We overflow with blessings."

"Sunday, Dec. 31st. Church morning. After church, we and our six children together—I addressed them all collected, and afterwards solemn prayer. How little likely on the 30th May, 1797, when I married, that we and all our six children (we never had another) should all be living and well! Praise the Lord, O my soul."

CHAPTER VIII.

Abuse on account of Efforts for Negro Emancipation—Death of his Sister—Letters to Children—Political Disturbances—Interest in Hayti.

THE year 1816 opened with a storm of opposition to the cause of Abolition well fitted to try the firmness and ascertain the reality of his principles. "The stream runs most strongly against us. Marryat's violent and rude publication, Matthison's more fair, and Hibbert's well-timed one, all come out to meet us at the first opening of parliament. But how vast is the influence of government; it is of that only we are afraid! Our cause is good, and let us not fear; assuredly God will ultimately vindicate the side of justice and mercy. Marryat's new pamphlet is extremely bitter against my religious profession, thinking that nail will drive. Poor fellow! I hope I can bear him no ill will, but allow for, and pity him."

It was comparatively easy to throw aside one or two such attacks, but it became a real trial of his principles

when they were daily repeated throughout years of patient perseverance in efforts for the good of others; when scandalous insinuations were multiplied, and every day produced a new set of slanders of such an aggravated kind, that "if they had been true," he told the House of Commons, "nothing but a special Providence could have prevented my being hanged full thirty years ago." Yet he stood the trial; never in his most unguarded hours did he manifest any bitterness of feeling; never in public was he led into angry recrimination. Often did he provoke some of his more impetuous colleagues by taking the part of the West Indian Planter—suggesting excuses for his conduct—alleging that there was no class of persons whom it was so much the interest of the actual managers to keep in darkness as to the abuses of the system—and so extenuating their moral guilt that he drew upon himself a portion of the storm which lowered over his West Indian slanderers. His severest public answer was an apt quotation of the words of Gibbon to an abusive assailant—"Every animal employs the note, or cry, or howl, which is peculiar to its species; every man expresses himself in the dialect most congenial to his temper and inclination, the most familiar to the company in which he has lived, and to the authors with whom he is conversant."

Throughout this session he had taken far less part than usual in its public business. A complaint on his chest hung upon him obstinately, and made him "fear that I shall do little more good. Alas, that I have not laboured more to make the best use of my faculties." "It is a stroke which I own I feel; not I hope with a rebellious but with a humbled will; yet I trust it may still please God to enable me to use my organs (and oh that it might be better in all ways) in His service, and for the benefit of my fellow-creatures." He was obliged therefore for the most part to confine his exertions in the House to his "own proper business," and to questions of a moral cast. As "a chamber counsel" he was still labouring diligently. Every year multiplied the private

claimants on his time, and this year they abounded from the tale of ordinary distress, and the throng of "breakfasters," to the "Duke of Kent who more than once called" on him "for two hours about his affairs, and why going abroad—hardly used." On some few great occasions he came forward, and always with effect; and at the end of the session he took an active part in the exertions which were made to provide relief for the pressing distresses of the times.

Lowestoft on the Suffolk coast was the scene of his summer retirement with his family. He had spent but a few weeks there and in its neighbourhood, when he was called suddenly away by the illness of a friend. "In how different a congregation," he writes to his family on the first Sunday he now spent at Bath, "have I been from that of Pakefield! It reminded me of the difference between the twelve poor fishermen, (I did not till now recollect that yours are literally such,) who constituted the first assemblages of Christians, and the well-dressed and well-mannered meetings of the high and the literary, who used to congregate for their various purposes of devotion or instruction. Though I make it an invariable rule not to write letters on a Sunday, except in cases of necessity and charity, yet on the principle of charity I may send you a few friendly lines. I need not assure you that on this day you are all much in my thoughts. I hope you all feel grateful for being brought at once into so friendly an intimacy with so excellent a family as that at Earlham.* For my part I am still full of Earlham, or rather of its inhabitants. One of our great astronomers has stated it as probable that there may be stars whose light has been travelling to us from the creation, and has not yet reached our little planet; and thus some have accounted for new stars first observed by more recent astronomers. In this Earlham family a new constellation has broke upon us, for which you must invent a name as you are fond of star-gazing;

* Joseph John Gurney's.

and if it indicate a little monstrosity, (as they are apt to give the collections of stars the names of strange creatures, dragons, and bears, &c.) the various parts of which the Earham assemblage* is made up, may justify some name indicative of queer combinations; only let it include also all that is to be esteemed, and loved, and respected too, and coveted."

Before he had spent many days at Bath, he received a hasty summons to attend upon his sister, who had been suddenly attacked by dangerous sickness. It was a great shock to him. His other sisters had been so early taken from them, that there had been none to share or to divide the affection for each other, which had grown in them with their growth and years. Her affectionate admiration of her brother had been rarely equalled, and affection was never wasted upon him. He had parted with her a few weeks before at Cambridge, and rejoiced "to see her better than she had been for a long time past." He was therefore unprepared for such a blow, and set off immediately with a heavy heart for Sunning Hill. "On arriving I heard that my sister had died yesterday at four o'clock. Poor Stephen much affected! Liable to strong paroxysms, at other times calm and pretty cheerful. I prayed by my dear sister's body, and with the face uncovered. Its fixedness very awful. I sat all the evening engaging Stephen while the coffin was adjusting below. How affecting all these things; how little does the immortal spirit regard it! Looking at night, till near two o'clock this morning, over my dear sister's letters—many to and from myself, when she and I first in earnest in religion."

"Our separation from each other just at this time," he writes to Lowestoft, "if it produces some pain, yet reminds us of the call we have for gratitude to the Father of mercies, who has so long spared us to each other. How can I but feel this, when our dear friend's solitary situa-

* Amongst the "large party" at the dinner table at Earham he mentions the Bishop of Norwich, Col. B. and Lady Emily, Mr. Buxton, Mr. Cunningham, Mr. Hudson Gurney, &c.

tion is so forcibly impressed on me ! I indeed have lost a most affectionate sister, one, of whom I can truly say, that I believe there never was on earth a more tenderly attached, generous, and faithful friend to a brother, who, though I hope not insensible to her value, saw but little of her to maintain her affection, of whom, alas, I could say much that might reasonably have abated the force and cooled the warmth of her attachment.

“How affecting it is to leave the person we have known all our lives, on whom we should have been afraid to let the wind blow too roughly, to leave her in the cold ground alone ! This quite strikes my imagination always on such occasions. But there is another thing which has impressed itself in the present instance much more powerfully than in any other I ever remember, I mean in contemplating the face of our dead friend to observe the fixed immovableness of the features. Perhaps it struck me more in my sister’s case because her countenance owed more of the effect it produced to the play of features than to their formation. I could not get rid of the effect produced on me by this stiff and cold fixedness for a long time. But oh it is the spirit, the inhabitant of the earthly tenement, not the tenement itself, which was the real object of our affection. How unspeakably valuable are the Christian doctrines and hopes in such circumstances as ours ! We should not care much, if we believed the object of our tender regard had gone a few days before us a journey we ourselves should travel ; especially if we knew that the journey’s end was to be a lasting abode of perfect happiness. Now blessed be God, this is after all not an illustration. It is the reality. The only drawback with me here is the consciousness that I have much to do for God, and the self-reproach for not having done it. Yet here also I can cast myself on the sure mercies of my God and Saviour ; and while I desire to do on each day the day’s proper work, and to be more active and useful than I ever yet have been, still I can humbly hope that if I should be taken hence with my work unfulfilled, He who said, ‘Thou didst well that it was in thine heart,’ will gracious-

ly forgive my sins; and that my all-merciful Saviour will take me to himself out of the same superabundant goodness, which I have ever experienced. For how true it is, (I am often driven to this,) ‘Thy thoughts are not as our thoughts, nor Thy ways as our ways; for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are Thy ways higher than our ways, and Thy thoughts than our thoughts!’

“I think I told you that my dear sister, when asked whether God comforted her and gave her peace, said, ‘O yes, so much so, as quite to put me to shame when I consider what a sinner I am.’ She then exclaimed—so like herself, ‘I hope this is not cant;’ adding however, ‘I am sure it is not all so.’”

After a few days he returned to Bath, and stayed in its neighbourhood until the 13th of November, when he set out by the London coach to join his family at Kensington Gore. “Arrived safely D. G. at half-past ten at Kensington Gore, after travelling above 700 miles without a single accident. The boys coming out immediately to me, and receiving me with humiliating kindness—God bless them!”

There had been no abatement of the storm which had been raised against the Registration Bill. It was taken up as a colonial question. A voluntary tax upon every hogshead of sugar which passed the Custom House, was raised by the West Indians to oppose the measure; and one and all clamoured loudly against its proposers. All this tumult of calumny passed over him almost unnoticed. At times indeed he nearly roused himself to make some reply, lest they should occupy the public mind, and prejudice his cause. But there is really no trace of any personal feeling in any of his entries.

It was not merely cheerfulness of temper, on which this calm was based, there was a deeper and more sure foundation for this high-minded peacefulness under perpetual provocation. “I get more and more to disrelish these brawlings, and to be less touchy as to my character. This I fear is chiefly from advancing years, and quiescence: something from the decay of natural spirits,

and some little I hope from the growing indifference to human estimation, and from an increased value for peace and love. But it is our clear duty to prevent our good being evil spoken of, when we can do this by a fair and calm defence; and I very greatly deplore my not having prepared an answer to Marryat." His answer to one charge, that he had pledged himself not to interfere with the condition of the slaves, deserves to be recorded. "It is really true," he tells Mr. Stephen, "as I must one day state, (I grieve at my not having answered Marryat in print; he very wisely never would enter into a controversy on his legs,) that the condition of the West Indian slaves first drew my attention, and it was in the course of my inquiry, that I was led to Africa and the Abolition. As long ago as in 1781, the very first year of my being in parliament, and when I was not twenty-two years of age, I wrote a letter to James Gordon expressing my hopes that some time or other I might become the instrument of breaking, or at least of easing, the yoke of these poor creatures."

The distresses of the country soon called him to his post: and leaving his family at Hastings, where he had taken them for health, he was in town by the opening of parliament upon the 28th of January, and found the political horizon unusually dark. "We are here (in the Secret Committee,)" he writes back to Hastings, "in the midst of accounts of plots, &c., but a gracious Providence, I trust, watches over us. Remember to pray in earnest against sedition, privy conspiracy, and rebellion." His time was now fully occupied. "I feel," he writes from the table of the Secret Committee room, "the effects of sitting up too late. But do not be uneasy, I am pretty well. Dear — asks about our Committee, though he very properly checks himself. We are not to divulge; but thus much I may say, though do not let it be repeated out of doors, that the seizing of the ringleaders on Sunday last prevented bloodshed from the Spa Fields mob on Monday. Hunt seems a foolish, mischief-making fellow, but no conspirator, though the tool of worse and deeper villains. Cobbett is the most pernicious of all;

but God will bless and keep us, I fear not; and it is highly gratifying that all the truly religious classes have nothing to do with the seditious proceedings. The blasphemous songs and papers of the seditious will disgust all who have any religion, or any decency."

So constant were at this time the calls on his attention that he assures Mr. Roberts, "you have perhaps supposed that now I am no longer member for Yorkshire I have as much leisure as I can desire for my own enjoyment and the service of my friends. If such was your surmise, never I assure you were you more mistaken. I do not find the smallest diminution of the amount of my business, though there is some difference in its nature." Yet in the midst of all this occupation the flow of his kindly natural affections was as warm and free as if his mind was never burdened by a single thought of business. Some of its expressions in his correspondence with his family are peculiarly striking; and his letters, though written often in "those edgings of time, which like the edgings of cloth or other substances are their least valuable part," are full of thought and manly tenderness. "Mr. R.'s last letter," he writes to Hastings at this time, "suggests to me some very painful fears that ——'s temper has been again ungoverned—dear, dear boy. Though writing at the Committee table with people all around me, I can scarce refrain from tears while I thus write about him. Oh that he would pray earnestly! How sure I am that he would then be blessed with grace, and be enabled to make our hearts leap for joy. Farewell—a thousand times God bless you all!"

This was the great aim of his parental watchfulness. "O if I could but see them give up their hearts to God," he says in another letter, "I think that I could cheerfully lay down my life." "Above all, my dearest ——," he writes to one of them on his tenth birth-day, "I am anxious to see in you decisive marks of this great change. I come again and again to look and see if it be indeed begun, just as a gardener walks up again and again to examine his fruit trees, and see if his peaches are set, and if they are swelling and becoming larger; finally, if

they are becoming ripe and rosy. I would willingly walk barefoot from this place" (near London) "to Sandgate, to see a clear proof of it in my dear —— at the end of my journey." "May God bless you, and if it be His will, may we be long spared to each other. I am strongly impressed with a persuasion that this will much depend on the goings-on of our children; and as I have often said, let it be with us an argument for growing in grace, that in proportion as we do thus cultivate an interest, if I may so express it, in the court of Heaven, the more we shall insure our children's edification in answer to our earnest prayers."

Upon his busiest days he found time to write to them. "Were it not," he tells one of his daughters, "that my eyes were so weak, and that, in such a state, writing by candle-light does not suit me, especially after a full day's work following a bad night, you would have received a good long letter instead of this sheetling. My last night's wakefulness arose in fact from my thinking on some subjects of deep interest, from which, though I made several efforts, I could not altogether withdraw my thoughts. My mind obeyed me indeed while I continued wide awake, but when I was dropping half asleep it started aside from the serious and composing train of ideas to which I had forced it up; and like a swerving horse chose to go its own way rather than mine. I like to direct my language as well as my thoughts and feelings towards you on a Saturday night, because it serves as a preparation for that more continued mental intercourse with you in which I allow myself on the Sunday. When I was a bachelor, and lived alone, I used to enliven the dullness of a solitary Sunday dinner by mustering my friends around me in idea, and considering how I could benefit any of them; and now how can there be a more suitable employment of a part of the Lord's day, than thus to call my absent children round me? And you, ——, and ——, will present yourselves to-morrow; and I shall pray that our great heavenly Shepherd will number you amongst the sheep of His pasture, and guide you at last into His fold above."

Many of these letters are highly indicative of his peculiar character of mind, from their cheerfulness subsiding into serious thought as affection stirred the deeper current of his feelings. Thus to one of his younger sons he writes from London.

“ House of Commons.

“ My dear ——,

I take advantage of a dull speech to come up-stairs and chat a little with my dear ——, though I heartily regret that I alone can be the speaker, for I should gladly hear my dear boy's voice and see his countenance. Yesterday was the first time of my going to Kensington Gore. I had no comfort there, but many qualms of emptiness when you were all away, and only vacant places to remind me of the want of you. I hope Mr. L. told you that I had tried to get your watch mended in time to go down to you by him, but in vain. A broken limb is not so easily repaired, especially when it is required that the party shall *go* as he did before. I am sorry to hear that the substitute you have is liable to occasional headaches. I hope you will bear this in mind in your treatment of it, and not let it be stunned or stupefied through carelessness.”

“ My very dear boy, I received no little pleasure from the account which Mr. L. gave of you. I hope that while he is absent from his earthly father, my dear —— will look up the more earnestly to that heavenly Father, who watches over all who trust in Him. Try to bring on your brother in all good, ever remembering my advice not to be satisfied with not being unkind, but trying to be positively kind. Above all remember prayer is the great means of spiritual improvement, and guard as you would against a wild beast which was lying in a bush by which you were to pass, ready to spring on you — guard in like manner against wandering thoughts when you are at prayer, either by yourself or in the family. Nothing grieves the spirit more than our willingly suffering our thoughts to wander, and fix themselves on any object which happens at the time to in-

terest us. May God bless and keep you, my very dear boy. I think that my dear —— is greatly improved in bearing little crosses of inclination properly, and I do hope that God will hear my prayers for him, and will make him a comfort and support to my declining years. I have indulged the serious train of thought into which I naturally fall in writing to my children, and am ever, my dear ——,

Your most affectionate father,
W. WILBERFORCE."

Nor was it for his children only that this tenderness of spirit had survived all the chilling influences of a long public life. His affection for his friends was in its degree as strong. "I am writing," he tells Mrs. Wilberforce, "at C.'s, with whom I am come to dine tête-à-tête. He sees no other company, dear fellow, so that it is a great pleasure to him I believe, and must be beneficial also, for me to sit with him as much as I can. You may be sure therefore, that I do my best in this way. It is a sad encroachment on my time; but I love him more and more, and value him not less. I must copy for you a short passage from Southey's last letter. 'I hope from your mention of C. that I was mistaken in representing him to be in a dangerous state of health. Yet when I saw him, I could not but fear that he was not long to be a sojourner on earth. There is an expression in his countenance at times, which has more of heaven than of earth about it; something which is at once inexpressibly sweet and mournful, like the smile of a broken heart.' Do show this beautiful passage to Mr. Rolliston, who appeared to me to enter fully into C.'s character. Indeed let all see it, as the beautifully tender sentiment, exquisitely expressed, of a very superior man concerning my dear friend. Lord Bacon says, that we bear better to hear our friends abused, than our enemies well spoken of. But I am sure that the converse of this dictum of the great Bacon's holds true in my instance; for this eulogy on the expression of my dear friend's coun-

tenance has given me very great pleasure. I must break off. Farewell.—”

One other brief but touching instance shall be added from these crowded days.

“My dear Stephen,

You appeared to me to look unhappy last night, as if something was giving you pain either in body or mind. It will be a pleasure to me to hear that this was not so; or if it was, and I can help to remove it, let me try.

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.”

The inquiries of the Secret Committee disclosed a fearful extent and degree of disaffection. “You and I agree,” he wrote to Mr. Macaulay before he came to town, “in esteeming it to be the duty of every good subject to support government when he can. But then I own I feel that to draw on ourselves the ill-will, and worse than neutrality, of opposition on all West Indian questions, when we cannot have government as our friends, is to act in a way, which though it might become our duty if the ship were in danger of going down, is not to be expected from us unless in such critical circumstances. I have again and again been silent when I should have spoken against the democrats, and even oppositionists, more especially against party, but for the consciousness that I had to look to the opposition rather than to government, as our supporters in the Registry Bill and West Indian matters.”

The unsettled aspect of the times now so far suspended these ordinary motives, that he prepared to take an active part in strengthening the hands of the executive.

A sharp and sudden fit of illness seized him the very day following the presentation of their Report by the Secret Committee, so serious as to hurry Mrs. Wilberforce to London on the summons of the friends who watched anxiously the inroads it was making on his feeble constitution; but after about three weeks, the cough, which was its worst symptom, yielded to medi-

cal treatment, and on the 11th of March he "thanked God that he was much better, but giving this week to annealing." His first attendance in the House was on the 18th, on the Lottery question. In moving its suppression, "Lyttleton argued too much like a man who is conscious that he is liable to be quizzed by his gay companions for talking of religion, morality, &c. Romilly as commonly was feeling, moral, and elevated. I had not arranged any order of thought, and I argued it too much on the ground of its effects, though not omitting higher considerations, but not enough introducing God's providence and will, (in the way wherein alone proper there,) and subjecting myself therefore to the answer Castlereagh gave, as if it were a question of feeling, not of right and wrong. How shocking does it seem to me on cool consideration, deliberately, for the sake of £500,000 per annum, to break God's laws and abjure his protection! Oh may he forgive us."

"Poor Sally More," says his Diary, May 19th, "died about a week ago, after long and extreme suffering; yet never impatient, but perfectly submissive and resigned—what a triumph of grace! All the world wild about Dr. Chalmers; he seems truly pious, simple, and unassuming. Sunday, 25th. Off early with Canning, Huskisson, and Lord Binning, to the Scotch Church, London Wall, to hear Dr. Chalmers. Vast crowds—Bobus Smith, Lord Elgin, Harrowby, &c. So pleased with him that I went again; getting in at a window with Lady D. over iron palisades on a bench. Chalmers most awful on carnal and spiritual man. Home tired, and satisfied that I had better not have gone for edification." "I was surprised to see how greatly Canning was affected; at times he quite melted into tears. I should have thought he had been too much hardened in debate to show such signs of feeling." "All London," he was soon after told in a very different circle from his own, "has heard of your climbing in at that window." With the healthful play of a vigorous mind he entered readily into the joke. "I was surveying the breach with a cautious and inquiring eye,

when Lady D., no shrimp you must observe, entered boldly before me, and proved that it was practicable."

In reviewing the month of May of this year, he indulges most feelingly in regret at the amount of time dissipated by the numerous visitors who thronged his house, often consuming the most important part of the day. Many, if not most of them, called on him for counsel or assistance, either in cases of personal interest or public benefit; though he laments the consumption of time, he could not but be sensible to the service he was rendering. Thus urging one of his children to steady application—"You cannot conceive," he says, "with what pleasure I look forward to the time when you will be able to engage in plans for the improvement and happiness of your fellow-creatures. I cannot but feel it as an honour, though except to a son I should not mention it, that when people have any scheme in view that is to do good they come to me as an ally in such a warfare against sin and misery." The very next day's Diary supplies an instance of these customary applications. "Cunninghame came in, and young Mr. W., with a charitable case of a foreigner and his family. I so much respect young W., a marine lieutenant giving up his half-pay for his father's support, and maintaining himself as a clerk in a warehouse, and yet busying himself for these poor people, that I could not help becoming answerable for the £20 he wanted for them, if I could not get it from the Distressed Foreigner's Institution."

The aspect of the times was again clouded over. "At Babington's, the window being open, we heard a shout, which we soon found was produced by Watson's acquittal. The Chief Justice Ellenborough summed up strongly against the prisoner, but it is said there was a jury-man who was decided to acquit. How ill-judged was it of government to suffer the trial to drag on so! Never surely was there a criminal convicted—never one who did not become popular—after having been the subject of a trial for six or seven days." The Secret Committee was now sitting, and he attended constantly at its deliberations, in vain endeavouring, on the 18th, "to get Pon-

sonby and Lord Milton to agree to the Report; they decidedly resolved not to do so;" and on the next day "altering the part respecting the employment of the secret informer." The Report was presented on the 20th, and on the 23d the Suspension of the Habeas Corpus Act was proposed by government. Mr. Wilberforce reluctantly supported what he deemed an unavoidable severity. His freedom from all party spirit gave a weight to his decision, which was keenly felt by opposition. Sir Samuel Romilly directed all his powers of eloquence and reasoning to take off the effect of so unimpeachable a judgment; and another member in a different strain attacked him warmly on the third reading with an unworthy sarcasm aimed at his religious work. "The honourable and religious member," as he addressed him amidst cries of order from all sides of the House, "could hardly vote for any measure more thoroughly opposed to vital Christianity." He was strongly tempted to retort on his opponent the obvious epithet suggested by his opening sarcasm; but with rare forbearance he repressed the impulse to render railing for railing.

"I shall take no notice," he began, "of what has been said concerning myself, though I claim no credit for my silence, for I am well convinced there is not a man in the House who would not feel lowered by replying to such language as the honourable member has allowed himself to use." "How," he said turning round to the preceding speaker, "how can the honourable member talk thus of those religious principles on which the welfare of the community depends? I would fain believe that he desires as sincerely as I do myself to perpetuate to his country the blessings she enjoys. But if I could be base enough to seek the destruction of those institutions which we both profess to revere, I will tell him what instrument I would choose. I would take a man of great wealth, of patrician family, of personal popularity, ay, and of respectable talents, and I am satisfied that such a one, while he scattered abroad the firebrands of sedition under pretence that he went all lengths for the people, would in reality be the best agent in the

malevolent purpose of destroying their liberties and happiness."

His Diary simply states, "B. forced me up in self-defence, and the House sided with me, though I forgot what I meant to say." "But never in my parliamentary life," says a member present, "did I hear a speech which carried its audience more completely with it, or was listened to with such breathless attention." "I cannot recall," says another, "the capital sentence with which he concluded; and the reporters, for I looked in the papers next morning, did no justice to its force. But I well remember the manner in which he worked up his supposition, and then brought it home to his opponent. You know B——'s manner when attacked, his head high, his body drawn up. His tall figure as he sat on the upper bench immediately behind was the higher of the two, even when Wilberforce stood up to speak. But when after speaking for a few minutes Wilberforce turned round to address him amidst the cheers of the House, he seemed like a pigmy in the grasp of a giant. I never saw such a display of moral superiority in my life."

Nothing can make his uniform forbearance more instructive than the knowledge that he at all times possessed this ready power of self-defence. "If there is any one," said Mr. Canning, "who understands thoroughly the tactics of debate, and knows exactly what will carry the House along with him, it certainly is my honourable friend the member for Bramber."

He had declined pushing the bill for the Registration of Negroes in the British Colonies, from an apprehension that it might hinder the progress of the treaty with Spain, in which he laboured diligently to procure a clause for the Abolition of the Slave Trade by that power. His Journal records frequent interviews with the ministry on this subject, and correspondence with the commissioners by whom the treaty was framed. These exertions were happily crowned with success, and he writes as follows to Mr. Macaulay.

“Stansted, Oct. 9th, 1817.

“My dear Macaulay,

However pressed for time, I must tell you without delay, or renounce forever all claims to being capable of the relations of peace and amity, that a very friendly and handsome letter from Lord Castlereagh informs me that he has actually received the Treaty with Spain (signed) for abolishing the Slave Trade generally and finally in May 1820, and immediately to the north of the line. Also, which is scarcely less valuable, that a system of mutual search is agreed to be established for enforcing the Abolition Law. Well may we praise God! I do congratulate you my dear friend, and no one has more right than you to be congratulated: for no one has done or suffered so much as yourself in and for this great cause.”

It was indeed “glorious intelligence”—a blessed fruit of many years of labour, spent in striving calmly and patiently to arouse the slumbering moral sense of a great people. “Let us,” is his characteristic call to his fellow worker, Mr. Stephen, “let us praise God for it.”

The first few weeks of the recess were spent by Mr. Wilberforce in clearing off the unavoidable accumulations of the session. They were busy and fatiguing days, and exposed to continual interruptions from the calls of charity, against which his doors were never closed. “July 21st. The birth-day of my two eldest children. I regretted that I was so hurried; I had little time to give to them, or to prayer for them. A poor woman called immediately after breakfast, just when I had meant to spend a quiet hour in devotion; but I called to mind Christ’s example, and looked up to Him, hoping that I should please Him more by giving up my own plan and pursuing His—writing for her.”

He was also writing to the Emperor of Russia, urging him to take such steps in the approaching Congress as should secure the execution of the Abolition compact.

To these employments was soon added a kind and

constant attendance on the death-bed of a sister of Mrs. Wilberforce.

“How striking,” he writes, “it is to see a tender-spirited young woman looking the last great enemy in the face, with as much calm resolution as was ever shown by any military hero in the field—with far more, indeed; for far more surely is required where all around tends to soften the mind, and give reason its full unruffled exercise, than when the drums, and trumpets, and artillery, and the bustle of war has excited all the passions. She has long been her mother’s consolation and earthly support; but these services can be rendered by other friends, or even by confidential dependants. There are still higher services which so much loved an object can alone render; weaning from this world and exercising faith, and patience, and child-like confidence and love. The effects of these will endure for ever; and the day will, I doubt not, arrive, when the mother shall see that her daughter was selected as the honoured instrument, after being her best and most assiduous friend in this world, of obtaining for her these still more excellent blessings. O my dear friend, the day is coming when it will be delightful to follow out all these now mysterious lines of Providence from the dark cloud in which they are at first wrapped, into the full brightness of celestial glory. This thought was brought powerfully to my mind this morning, when observing that a passion-flower was about to open we stopped for about five minutes, and beheld the complete developement of the beauties and symmetry of the interior.

“May God bless you and yours, my dear friend. What a blessing is friendship? How true is the psalmist’s exclamation, ‘How good it is to dwell together in unity?’ It is in short a heaven upon earth. May we realize it here, from its being the reflection from the better and less imperfect state of it beyond the mountains. Kindest remembrances to all common friends, and believe me ever,

Your affectionate and sincere friend,
W. WILBERFORCE.”

This was now become the ordinary temper of his mind. The morning clouds had passed away, and he walked in the fullest sunshine of "peace and joy in believing." His earlier Journals contain, as has been seen, records of hard struggles with "divers temptations;" but the power of the enemy had been long since rebuked; and after the most close and jealous self-examination he could humbly say, "I prefer spiritual to carnal pleasures, and never suffer any thing sensual to get the advantage over me deliberately. Am I guarded enough on the sudden?" He was still ever praying to be more fully "quickened, warmed, and purified;" and at times he complained "from what cause soever it is, my heart is invincibly dull. I have again and again gone to prayer, read, meditated, yet all in vain. Oh, how little can we do any thing without the quickening grace of God! I will go again to prayer and meditation. Blessed be God, His promises do not vary with our stupid insensibility to them. Surely God has always blessed me in all things, both great and small, in a degree almost unequalled, and never suffered me materially to fail when there has been an occasion for exertion."

But though occasionally harassed by such "dulness of heart," his ordinary spirit was far different. The full spring of love and joy, and thankfulness was bursting forth into spontaneous expression in his conversation, his letters, and his Journal. All the natural objects round him had become the symbols of the presence and love of his heavenly Father, and like the opening of the passion-flower, suggested to him some new motives for thankfulness and praise. "I was walking with him in his veranda," says a friend, "the year before, watching for the opening of a night-blowing cereus. As we stood by in eager expectation, it suddenly burst wide open before us. 'It reminds me,' said he, as we admired its beauty, 'of the dispensations of Divine Providence first breaking on the glorified eye, when they shall fully unfold to the view, and appear as beautiful as they are complete.'" "For myself," says one of his letters, (Aug. 28th,) when to his own family he unveiled his heart, "I can truly

say, that scarcely any thing has at times given me more pleasure than the consciousness of living as it were in an atmosphere of love; and heaven itself has appeared delightful in that very character of being a place, in which not only every one would love his brethren, but in which every one would be assured that his brother loved *him*, and thus that all was mutual kindness and harmony, without one discordant jarring; all sweetness without the slightest acescency."

There was no obtrusive display of such emotions. True Christian joy is for the most part a secret as well as a serene thing. The full depth of his feelings was even hidden from his own family. "I am never affected to tears," he says more than once, "except when I am alone." A stranger might have noticed little else than that he was more uniformly cheerful than most men of his time of life. Closer observation showed a vein of Christian feeling mingling with and purifying the natural flow of a most happy temper; whilst those who lived most continually with him, could trace distinctly in his tempered sorrows, and sustained and almost child-like gladness of heart, the continual presence of that "peace which the world can neither give nor take away." The pages of his later Journal are full of bursts of joy and thankfulness; and with his children, and his chosen friends, his full heart welled out ever in the same blessed strains; he seemed too happy not to express his happiness; his "song was ever of the loving-kindness of the Lord." An occasional meeting at this time with some who had entered life with him and were now drawing wearily to its close with spirits jaded and tempers worn in the service of pleasure or ambition, brought out strongly the proof of his better "choice." "This session," he says, "I met again Lord —, whom I had known when we were both young, but of whom I had lost sight for many years. He was just again returned to parliament, and we were locked up together in a committee room during a division. I saw that he felt awkward about speaking to me, and went therefore up to him. 'You and I, my Lord, were pretty well ac-

quainted formerly.' 'Ah, Mr. Wilberforce,' he said cordially; and then added with a deep sigh, 'you and I are a great many years older now.' 'Yes, we are, and for my part I can truly say that I do not regret it.' 'Don't you?' he said, with an eager and almost incredulous voice, and a look of wondering dejection, which I never can forget." "You must allow that Mr. Wilberforce is cheerful," said some of his friends to one who had just spent a week in the same house with him, and who was fixing on religion the old charge of dulness. "Yes," she said in a tone intended to convey reproach, "and no wonder: I should be always cheerful too, if I could make myself as sure as he does that I was going to heaven."

Yet with all this constant cheerfulness there was a marvellous sobriety in his religion. His secret records of humiliation are aimed at specific faults, and do not waste themselves in generalities. "How sad," he says on one of these occasions, "that I am still molested by the love of human estimation; so that when a man whom I think of very mean intellect spoke disparagingly of me before others I felt vexed. What weakness! and all the time abhorring myself for it too; what a strange thing is the heart of man!" Again, "I love human estimation too well, though I trust I strive against it; and I have no temptation to seek dishonourable gain. Now how ready am I to condemn those who addict themselves to the latter! Yet am not I as criminal in loving the former, for it is the not loving God that is the vice? O Lord, purify me, and make me meet to be partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light." Again he complains, "What over-valuation of human estimation do I find within me! And then also what self-complacent risings of mind will force themselves upwards, though against my judgment, which at the very moment condemns them, and yet my heart then claims credit for this condemnation! Oh the corruption and deceitfulness of the heart!"

The same sober judgment watched over his hours of unusual religious joy. "Let me put down," he says this

month, "that I have had of late a greater degree of religious feeling than usual. Is it an omen, as has once or twice shot across my imagination—a hint that my time for being called away draws nigh? Surely were it not for my dearest wife I could not regret it, humbly hoping, deeply unworthy as I am, that there is a propitiation for our sins, and that the mercies of God through Christ would not fail me. But oh let me check the emotions of indolence and of trying to have done with the turmoil of this vain world of perturbations, and give way to a more lively gratitude for the mercies of the Saviour, and a more active determination and consequent course of holy obedience and usefulness. Alas, alas, considering my opportunities, I have been a sadly unprofitable servant. Pardon me, O Lord; quicken, soften, warm, invigorate me, and enable me to rise from my torpor, and to imitate the example of holy Paul, doing this one thing, forgetting the things behind, and pressing forward towards the mark of our high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Alas, I fear I sadly neglect my duties to my children, and also to the poor, for though I serve the latter more abundantly than by individual visitation, when with the motive of Christ's speech, (Matt. xxv. 40,) I attend to whole classes and masses of them, yet individual visitation has its good also. O Lord, teach, guide, quicken me. Without Thee I can do nothing; with Thee all things. Lord, help, bless and keep me. Amen."

It is well worth the inquiry by what system of self-treatment these happy fruits had been matured. They were not merely the results of a naturally cheerful temper leavened with religious feeling; they resulted from close and systematic discipline. He kept a most strict watch over his heart. He still recorded by a set of secret marks the results of frequent and close self-examination under a number of specific heads. He used every help he could devise for keeping always on his soul a sense of the nearness and the goodness of his God. "I used to have an expedient similar to the Jewish phylacteries, (Numb. xv. 38, 39,) in order to keep up the sense of God's presence. Let me try it again. I must have Him

for my portion and the strength of my heart, or I should be miserable here as well as hereafter." Another custom from which he "found great benefit was putting down motives for humiliation, motives for thankfulness, and so on, which" he "carried about with" him, "and could look at during any moment of leisure." Such a paper, copied in part from one of earlier date, appears in a pocket-book of this year.

HUMILIATION, MEANS OF, AND TOPICS FOR.

"Consider—all my motives and just causes for gratitude; constant, fervent, self-denying gratitude; and then with this contrast my actual state—all my means and motives also to improvement and greater advance in the Christian character. That if all that really passes within were visible, all the workings of evil positive and negative, (especially if compared with my principles and lessons to others,) all my selfishness of feeling, and coldness of affection, too often towards those even whom I love and ought to love most, all my want of self-denial, all my self-indulgence, what shame would cover me! Yet that comparatively I care not for its being known to God. And is this because of His and Christ's mercy? Oh what baseness! My incurable, at least uncured, love of human approbation, and my self-complacency or pain when much granted or withheld, even when my judgment makes me abhor myself for it. (I trust I can say I do not allow this vicious feeling, but repress it with indignation and shame.) Oh were all that passes within in this instance to be seen fully, what shame should I feel! Realize this.—Look at various other Christians who have not enjoyed half my advantages or motives to growth in grace, yet how immeasurably they exceed me!" (Here many individuals are mentioned.)

"How little good have I done compared with what I might have done! What procrastination! Consider in detail how deficient in the duties of an M. P., father, master, friend, companion, brother. Resolutions broken. Intemperance often. How sinful this when taken in

relation to motives to self-denial, from love to Christ—and to self-extinction, for me a vile ungrateful sinner! Oh shame, shame!

“Early advantages abused, and benefits often lost. What an (almost) hell of bad passions (despair absent) in my soul when a youth, from emulation, envy, hatred, jealousy, selfishness! (Yet, alas! justice to myself requires my adding how ill-treated here.) Time, talents, substance, &c. wasted, and shocking goings-on (Christianity considered: and after the revellings over, as egregious waste of faculties and means among the fellows; card-playing, &c. Consequent course of living almost without God in the world, till God’s good providence checked and turned me, (oh miracle of mercy!) in 1785, through the Dean’s instrumentality.

“But, alas! since I professed and tried to live to God, sometimes only preserved from gross sin and shame by preventing grace. And, alas! even till now how little progress, how little of the Divine nature, how little spirituality either in heart or life, how little of a due adorning of the doctrine of God my Saviour! How much vanity and undue solicitude about human estimation! (Oh if transparent here!) Procrastination, inefficiency, self-indulgence, living below principles and rules. Contrast all this with my almost unequalled mercies and blessings. And remember God and Christ foreknow all thy ingratitude. N. B. All thy sins, great and small, are open to God’s eye as at first, entire, and fresh, and unfaded, except as blotted out by Christ’s blood.

“I find it one of the best means of gaining self-abhorrence, after such reflection as above delineated, to consider and press home what I should think and feel about another favoured in all respects as myself, who should be such in all particulars as I am in point of sins, negligences, weaknesses, neglect and misuse of talents, &c.; and then contrast my sins with my mercies, my service with my motives, my obligations with my coldness, the gratitude due with the evil returned. Alas! alas! God be merciful to me a sinner.”

The friend, whose death-bed he was now cheering,

"reading and praying with her daily," was upheld to the last by the same consolations. When her eyes had been closed in peace, he took his family to spend their summer holidays at Stansted, which had been kindly lent to him by his friend Lewis Way.

He spent a month at Stansted, "making an excursion for twenty-four hours to Huskisson's country house, where I was most kindly received." He delighted in receiving almost as much as giving such proofs of friendship; and with playful philosophy threw aside any of the little troubles it entailed. "Mr. Smith, the steward," are his Stansted Park reflections, "was all that could be desired—extremely obliging; in short, just representing his master. He, dear kind man, had endeavoured in every way to render me comfortable, had left me wine, and even china, plates, &c.; and the key of all his libraries, even of the sanctum sanctorum. We of course tried to do as little harm as possible. Though at first I thought we must have gone away on account of the housekeeper's bad temper, which sadly effervesced."

Haytian business much engrossed him. His first consent to enter into correspondence with Christophe led to an assurance, "that they would take any thing from him," and Christophe (by whom he had been entreated to sit for his picture, a request made the year before by Blucher) sent him in return the only portraits of himself and of his son which he had allowed to be taken. He was on his guard in opening this correspondence.

To avoid all misconstruction he "determined to show Lord Liverpool the Haytian letters. I think it best; he is a man of considerable religious principle, and surely the prospects dawning upon Hayti will prevent his yielding to the highly probable disposition of too many of the West Indians, to blast these opening buds of moral and social comfort and virtue." This was no exaggerated estimate of the interest of the cause. "Were I five-and-twenty," Sir Joseph Banks wrote to him asking for Haytian information, "as I was when I embarked with Captain Cook, I am very sure I should not lose a day in embarking for Hayti. To see a set of human

beings emerging from slavery, and making most rapid strides towards the perfection of civilization, must I think be the most delightful of all food for contemplation."

Christophe was truly a great man. Born and educated as a slave, he had raised himself to absolute power, which he was most solicitous to use for the good of his countrymen. To educate his people, to substitute the English tongue for that of France, and the Reformed faith for that of Rome, were now his leading projects; and in them he sought for Mr. Wilberforce's aid and counsel. His letters everywhere abound in truly elevated plans. "He has requested me," Mr. Wilberforce tells Mr. Stephen, "to get for him seven schoolmasters, a tutor for his son, and seven different professors for a Royal College he desires to found. Amongst these are a classical professor, a medical, a surgical, a mathematical, and a pharmaceutical chemist." He entered warmly into Christophe's views. "Oh how I wish I was not too old, and you not too busy to go!" he writes to Mr. Macaulay. "It would be a noble undertaking to be sowing in such a soil the seeds of Christian and moral improvement, and to be laying also the foundation of all kinds of social and domestic institutions, habits, and manners." It produces quite a youthful glow through my whole frame," he writes to Mr. Randolph in America, "to witness before I die in this and so many other instances, the streaks of religious and moral light illuminating the horizon, and though now but the dawning of the day, cheering us with the hopes of their meridian glories." It was with this end especially that he undertook this new charge. "Christophe is not himself, I fear," he says, "governed by religious principles," but he was ready to admit and ever to uphold religion. "I have succeeded," he tells Mr. Hey, "in finding a physician, but I still want a surgeon, and much more a divine. Oh what would I give for a clergyman who should be just such as I could approve!"

He wrote at once to Mr. Simeon to bespeak his assistance in this search.

"We have been," he tells one of his sons, "harder at work than ever, and still we are in the state in which the sea is after a great storm—a heavy swell—by no means at rest in the haven. For till we hear the ship has actually sailed, more 'last words' are continually occurring. And I find this Haytian connexion will by no means be an encouragement to indolence. But I trust it will be an occasion for doing much good, and I really look up to God with renewed thankfulness; I say renewed, for His having by His good providence drawn me to the Abolition business has always appeared to me to call for the most lively gratitude. Individuals who are not in parliament seldom have an opportunity of doing good to considerable numbers. Even while I was writing the sentence I became conscious of the falsehood of the position; witness Mrs. Hannah More, and all those who labour with the pen. Witness Dr. Jenner, and Sir Humphry Davy, and all the good clergymen, which last class however, I meant to except from the remark. But what various and extensive occasions of benefitting their fellow-creatures are presented to members of parliament in this highly-favoured country! And what thanks do I owe to God, for having led me from any subordinate line of official business into lines of service of extremely extensive usefulness, and less bitterly contentious, till Mr. Marryat entered the field, than the walks of politics! In this Haytian instance, we are sowing the seeds of civilization and knowledge in a new society, which (may it please God) you may live to see exhibiting the new spectacle of a community of black men, of which the mass will be as well instructed as any nation upon earth. I will enclose you some returns of the state of the schools which I have just now received. Pray take care of them, and return them in three or four days, after showing them to any confidential friends; but I think it is better to keep Hayti in the back ground, till it is able to stand on its legs in a firmer attitude.

"My dearest boy, remember my counsel. If you come into parliament, let me earnestly entreat you not to expend yourself in speechifying on questions of grand po-

litical, or rather I mean party contention; but while you take part in the public and general discussions that are of real moment, for this is what I have commonly done, choose out for yourself some specific object, some line of usefulness. Make yourself thoroughly acquainted with your subject, and you will not only be listened to with attention, but you will please God, do great good. This is the mode in which I have often advised young men to proceed, but they seldom would be wise enough to follow my counsel, and hence you hear of many of them making one or two good speeches, and then all is over. This is really a sad waste of the means of prodigious usefulness which Providence has put into their power."

With such views opening on him, it was not unnatural that he should say, "never hardly did I feel so much interested as in finding proper people for Christophe, especially a tutor for his son." This was no easy task. When he first began the work he had received no remittances from Hayti. He cared little for this, as far as it regarded his own risk . . . "if I should be a few hundred pounds out of pocket, the money might not be ill spent . . . but" he scarcely knew what to promise others. Soon however, he was intrusted with a considerable sum, which "proved Christophe to be in earnest;" and he was able to offer liberal terms to the professors. Still it was difficult to find any except men of broken fortunes, who would emigrate to Hayti. "It has often struck me," Mr. Stephen says to him, "that you and all who have thought on the subject without experience, have formed an inadequate conception of the sacrifice involved in a colonial residence. Rely on it that in general there are only two motives strong enough to keep any man or woman, without necessity, six months in the West Indies;—religious zeal, and auri sacra fames." At Hayti, moreover, all depended on Christophe's life and power. His demoralized and debased subjects must be coerced into morals and civilization; and his death or a revolution, would risk the fortunes or the lives of these his stranger guests.

Patiently and perseveringly did Mr. Wilberforce strug-

gle against all these difficulties, not only corresponding largely with all quarters from which he might gather the assistance he required, but receiving both at "Kensington and Stansted the different applicants, that they might stay with me a few days, and enable me the better to take their dimensions." With all his overflowing kindness he was a shrewd observer of men's characters, and where he trusted to himself seldom imposed upon. Scarcely ever did a complaint escape from him in all this disagreeable service; and once only does he tell Mr. Stephen, "S., whose weakness and vanity are doing all the harm they can, has positively haunted us of late." So closely did he labour at the small French writing of this long correspondence, that his eyesight was permanently injured.

CHAPTER IX.

Death of Princess Charlotte—Interest in Negroes—Mrs. Fry—Visit to the Lakes—Efforts for benefit of Hayti—Humility—Religious Anniversaries.

HE had now returned into the neighbourhood of London, after spending a few days at Woodhall Park, that he might get more undisturbed time to complete his Haytian letters. "I have been excessively busy of late, and in the line of duty. But my devotional time has been too much broken in upon; and this must not be. Much harassed by applications for recommendations to Hayti, by people of whom I know nothing." "Nov. 4th. W. set off for college. Talked much to him to-day; telling him the chief events of my early life. I could not sleep quietly for anxiety; yet dear —— means to give me pleasure. I fear he will be overborne from not forbearing to expose himself to temptation. I told him often the main matter was to put the guard in the right place. 6th. Heard for certain, what before reported,

that Princess Charlotte died about five hours after the birth of a very fine, but still-born boy. She bore her long sufferings admirably. About ten days before, she had remarked, 'Certainly I am the happiest woman in the world, I have not a wish ungratified—surely this is too much to last.' The loss most deeply felt; their life had been truly exemplary—charitable, unostentatious kindness to all the poor around Claremont." "I must say," is the postscript of a letter sent on this day to Mr. Babington, "alas! for Claremont; yet surely this is an event which reasoning on Scripture principles we may easily comprehend, both in the probable meaning of personal mercy, and national, as well as domestic, punishment."

"I thought," his Diary continues, "in the night of writing a letter to the Prince Regent, hoping to find his heart accessible, and put down some notes for it: but this day scarcely spent so profitably as Sundays should be. Too little private prayer and communion with God aimed at. Oh remember thy high calling and the precious promises, 2 Cor. vi. at the end, and 1 John iii. 1, 2, of fellowship with the Father and Christ, and Psalms lxiii. lxxxiv. xxxvi. O sursum corda." "Sent off," he says soon after, "a suitable letter with my Practical View to Prince of Coburgh. May God prosper it;"—and the notice of a "kind answer in which he promises to read it," is followed by the prayer, "May God bless to him the perusal of it."

The year 1818 was an important era in the West Indian struggle; for though no ameliorating measure was actually carried, the friends of Africa were led into new counsels, and assumed a new position. The opposition made to the Registration Act forced them to establish its necessity, by going into an examination of the actual state of the slave population; and these inquiries revealed at once such an amount of crime and cruelty, as proved that there was no cure for the evils of the system, short of its entire subversion. "Our grand object, and our universal language," says his private memoranda, "was and is, to produce by Abolition a dis-

position to breed instead of buying. This is the great vital principle which would work in every direction, and produce reform every where." This had been hitherto their only aim; but a fuller view of the secret iniquities of the colonial system, too surely convinced him that even this would not heal all its evils; and now therefore for the first time the word *emancipation* occurs amongst his secret counsels. Yet as another instance of the practical and cautious character of all his efforts, he thought not in emancipation of depriving the owners of West Indian properties of their present right to the labour of their slaves, but only of granting to the slave, such civil rights, as should bring him under the protection of just and equal laws, and make him a member of the commonwealth instead of the chattel of an absent master.

The fine shadings of these altering views, and their various colours as they pass into each other, cannot be so well exhibited as by free extracts from the private Diary in which they are recorded at the moment, mingled with the intervening objects which filled up his time. But it is impossible within reasonable limits to publish all there is of interest in these treasures of his mind. He appears about this time to have had his attention turned to this question by some accounts of horrible atrocities perpetrated in the West Indies, and led to many consultations with his friends as to the best mode of effecting a melioration of the condition of the slaves. The following entry may serve as a correct specimen, and exhibit the feeling with which he regarded this important subject. "March 8th. Sunday. Lay awake several hours in the night, and very languid this morning. My mind is very uneasy, and greatly distracted about the course to be pursued in the West India matters. It is hard to decide especially where so many counsellors. This is clear, that in the Scriptures no national crime is condemned so frequently, and few so strongly, as oppression and cruelty, and the not using our best endeavours to deliver our fellow-creatures from them. Jer. vi. 6: 'This is a city to be visited: she is wholly oppression in the midst of her.' Ezek. xvi. 49—of Sodom's crimes: 'Neither

did she strengthen the hands of the poor and needy.' Zeph. iii. 1, Amos iv. 1, 8, &c. I must therefore set to work, and oh Lord, direct, and support, and bless me! If it please Thee not to let me be the instrument of good to these poor degraded people, may I still be found working, like dear Stephen, with vigour and simple obedience, remembering 'It is well for thee that it was in thy heart.' 11th. Sadly distressed in mind about the proper course as to West Indian matters, but I believe it is wiser not to bring the subject forward just now, when the public mind and too many of our friends are full of the Indemnity Bill. Many of the opposition are our friends.

"28th. I am still in no little embarrassment what course to pursue as to the West Indian question. The denunciations not only against those who are guilty of the positive acts of oppression, but against those who connive at its continuance, are so strong that I am truly uneasy at my having suffered so much time to pass away without having done any thing for relaxing the yoke of the most degrading and bitter bondage that ever ground down the human species. Yet valid objections have always occurred against every specific plan. Oh may I be directed right! I quite long to bring some measure forward. Lord, guide and strengthen, and warm me with true Christian love of Thee, and desire to benefit my fellow-creatures for His sake. 31st. Much impressed by Mr. Buxton's book on our prisons, and the account of Newgate reform. What lessons are taught by Mrs. Fry's success! I am still warmed by the account. Were I young, I should instantly give notice of the business, if no one else did.

"April 22d. Stephen's library for quiet, and preparing for discussion in House on West Indian affairs. My motion for papers explaining about Registry Bill. I spoke long but not well—too much matter imperfectly explained and without due method. But the mercenary feelings of some, and the prejudices of others, with the cry against me, make the reporters so inattentive to me, that they do not affect to report what I say.

May God only enable these poor injured creatures to find a deliverer! What men say of me is little—in some views it is even gratifying. I used to fear I was too popular, and I remember ‘Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in Him, &c.’ Only forgive me my own many defects, infirmities and negligences.

“24th. I could not sleep last night for thinking of poor H. Shelton, with whom John Sargent had been yesterday in Newgate, and described her unutterable agony—to suffer this morning for forgery. To Education Committee by Brougham’s desire—then lodgings, where wrote and dined on cold meat. The Courier of yesterday contains a most bitter attack on me and others for West Indian interference; I am almost glad of it: surely God will assert his own cause when the powers of darkness thus come forward and instigate their agents. He will overpower them. I have no fear, though my poor weak body and decayed faculties may not enable me to see in this world the triumph.

“May 1st. Simons staying in the house officiated at family prayer—devotional, but not sufficiently practical; stating warmly the privileges and enjoyments, and in a degree the character of Christians, but none of those urgent admonitions and warnings, which Scripture contain, nor those exhortations to penitence. When clear from people, to Freemasons’ Hall. Meeting of the friends of National Schools called together to replenish the treasury—Duke of York in the chair—Archbishop of Canterbury, York, and Bishop of London, and ten or twelve more. Lord Harrowby moved the first resolution, which given me to second. All circumstances considered . . . my having been canvassed by the Archbishop himself, my being suspected, though falsely, of loose attachment to the Church because I do not hate Dissenters . . . I gave £50,—more than I could well afford,—and doubled my annual subscription; but we are not to suffer our good to be evil spoken of.

“10th. Determined to come in again for Bramber, at least for two years, under some strange circumstances. Thus Providence seems to fashion my ways, and if I

should go entirely out of public life in two years, I hope to have previously sown the seeds and laid the foundation of the West Indian reform. I shall then, if I live, be sixty, as much as most men's seventy. But my times, O Lord, are in Thy hand. Oh how truly may I say, that goodness and mercy have followed me all my days! What cause have I to be thankful for kind friends! Lord Gambier most affectionate. Stephen most disinterested, and kind, and generous. Babington and Inglis, Charles Grant and Macaulay too, and Col. Barry truly friendly, frank, and kind. Surely no man ever had such undeserved mercies. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

"17th. Trinity Sunday. Blessed be God, I felt to-day more sensibly than of late the power of divine things. Was it the present reward of not yielding to the impulse which I felt, but upon good grounds, to be longer in bed? I remembered Christ's rising long before day, and got up. Babington sent me a kind letter, warning me of H.'s excessive and vindictive rage, and intention to charge me with duplicity (I am sure I can say in the presence of God, none was intended) about the Bill for permitting the removal of gangs of slaves from the Bahamas to Guiana. Lord, undertake for me; let me not bring discredit on Thy holy faith. Thou hast the hearts of all under Thy power, O turn them favourably towards me. At least let me not discredit Thy cause. I will not think on this business until to-morrow: but to-day I may say, 'Lord, be Thou my surety for good.' How many are the passages in the Psalms which give comfort under the assaults of unreasonable and violent men! How strongly have I felt the double man within me to-day! I really despise and abhor myself for the rising of thoughts referring to human estimation; which nevertheless will rise even as to this very self-abhorrence, and so on ad infinitum. Oh what poor creatures we are! This should make us long for a purer heart and a better world."

He soon after left London on an excursion to the lakes of Cumberland and Westmoreland. His spirit expanded amidst rural sights and sounds, and his heart

overflowed with thankfulness to the Giver of all his mercies. He longed to teach all around him his own song of gratitude, and could scarcely bear its absence. "Most kindly received," he says after visiting an early friend, "by T., and he lives most comfortably, to the full of that word—I might say splendidly; but it is grievous and very injurious to spend day after day enjoying every indulgence without the mention or apparent thought of the Giver of all good, and the Object of all hopes. Oh if a fellow-creature had given us every thing, how should we have talked of him! What exuberant overflowings of gratitude should we have witnessed! It is a delightful place, and a magnificent house. But I find it hurt my own mind: I felt less from the non-recognition of Christ the latter days than the first and second. Oh that I might more and more walk by faith habitually!" "Alas, poor G., from spending all his time in hunting and farming, is grown empty and stupid."

"There are two places," he had said in earlier life, "to which, if I ever marry, I will take my wife—to Barley Wood, and Westmoreland." But Westmoreland he had never yet found time to visit since his marriage; and even now, the fresh arrival of some Hayti parcels made him "grieve in secret over this lake expedition." Mr. Southey had endeavoured to engage for him a house at Keswick; and, though unsuccessful, enticed him onwards by letter. "I am very sorry that you are not in this delightful country during this delightful weather. We are enjoying a real honest, old-fashioned summer, such as summers were forty years ago, when I used to gather grapes from my grandmother's chamber window—warm weather for polemical writing; and yet little as such writing is to my taste, I have been employed in it for the last week. B., with his usual indiscretion, thought fit to attack me from the hustings. It was wholly unprovoked, as I had taken no part whatever in the election, and every thing which he said of me was untrue. So I am giving him such a castigation as he never had before, and which it is to be hoped may last him for his life." Ten days later he writes again,

"The heat of the summer is checked, and we are enjoying sun and showers, with just such a temperature as makes exercise pleasant, and allows one to enjoy a little fire at night. I am as true to the hearth as a cricket or a favourite spaniel, and reckon it a privation when the weather is too hot for enjoying this indulgence."

Some continuous extracts from his Diary during this excursion will show the natural working of his mind in a time of relaxation. Leaving Elmdon on the 10th, he reached Seaforth House, near Liverpool, upon the 11th of August. "When we got upon the paved roads, our linch-pin twice came out, and our spring-straps broke. A kind Providence favoured us, that no accident. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

"12th. Morning and evening prayers. How gratifying that we have some Christian merchants! Most kind treatment. Stayed at home for writing. Mr. J. remarkably pleasant—overflowing, and sparkling all the while. In the evening got into an argument about Dr. Johnson's religion. Mr. J. showed me afterwards Dr. Johnson's affecting farewell to Windham—"May you and I find some humble place in the better world, where we may be admitted as penitent sinners. Farewell. God bless you for Christ's sake, my dear Windham."

"In the night," he tells a friend to whom his heart was open, "a certain subject is apt to get the better of me and keep me awake; not so much from direct distress as from its being so interesting that it occupies the mind, and the effort of thought which is required for turning to another subject wakes me." These wakeful nights were a great drain upon his strength, but careful self-discipline had taught him the true Christian alchemy which can extract from all outward things the elements of gratitude and praise. "I am up late," says his Journal, "from having a very sleepless night, though blessed be God a very comfortable one—no pain and even no anxiety; my mind meditating gratitude to God for all his mercies, and thinking over passages of the Psalms." It was a striking sight on such a morning to contrast his "hunted" and languid frame with the full burst of thank-

fulness and joy, which seemed to flow most freely when the weakness of the body showed that it sprung from a spiritual and heavenly source.

"Sept. 2d. R. and S. off to see Keswick." They went longing to see Southey, but charged not to call upon him, "lest seeing lads of your age, should too painfully remind him of the son whom he has lost."

"5th. I took a two hours' walk by Rydale and Grasmere, and a good deal tired." It was not a little affecting to see him retracing with delight all his haunts of earlier days—another man in many things; his body bent and weakened, but his mind furnished and matured; his soul purer and well established after many struggles; but having passed through all the bustling scenes of an unquiet life with the simplicity of early tastes and affections unimpaired, pointing out to his children every well-remembered beauty, and teaching them by golden precepts and a most eloquent example the secret of his own calm and happy temper. "Why should you not buy a house here," one of his children asked him, as they walked, "and then we would come here every year?" "I should enjoy it," was his answer, "as much as any one, my dear, but we must remember we are not sent into the world merely to admire prospects and enjoy scenery. We have nobler objects of pursuit. We are commanded to imitate Him, who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. It doubles my own enjoyment to see my dear children enjoy these scenes with me; and now and then, when we need rest from severe labours, it may be permitted to us to luxuriate in such lovely spots, but it is to fit us for a return to duty; and we must bear in mind too that at present we are in a world which is in a measure under the wrath of God, and there is much mercy in every natural beauty that is left in it. We may be contented to wait for full enjoyment till we get above to that blessed place, where the desire of our gracious God to bless us shall meet with no obstruction, and His love shall have no check upon its full exercise."

Yet he tasted thankfully of present pleasures. "I do not often," he tells Mr. Stephen, "get out of the garden

for any vagarious wanderings, but whenever I do extend my walk, as to-day, for instance, when I was seduced from pacing it upon the terrace with my reader at my side, and get among the rocks, and scale the mountains, I quite long to have you with me." "7th. Busy till one. Then on Winandermere. Dined in the boat, under the lee of the great Island. Home late, a delightful evening. Yesterday evening charming. Walked out at night and saw the moon and a flood of light from Wordsworth's terrace. 20th. Fair at church-time, and I went to Grasmere, where — read a common-place sermon at cantering or rather galloping pace; he preached last Sunday a sad trifling sermon on repairing Chester cathedral; and before that, one chiefly taken from Hall's on the Princess Charlotte, utterly unintelligible to the bulk of his hearers. He dined with us, and I was sorry to find he already knew Cooper's Practical Sermons. I hoped they would have approved themselves to him—but alas! In the afternoon I walked to two or three cottages, and talked on religion to the people." His fervent spirit could scarce be contained in the full sight of such a state of things. "Our population," Mr. Southey told him, "is in a deplorable state both as to law and gospel. The magistrates careless to the last degree; whilst the clergyman of — has the comprehensive sin of omission to answer for. The next generation I trust will see fewer of these marrying and christening machines. The manners of the people have dreadfully worsened during his long sleep. Even within my remembrance there has been a great change."

During his short stay amongst the Lakes he did what he could to check this evil. He strove to rouse the slumbering energies of all whom he could reach or influence, and in all his scenery excursions visited the poor himself. He wrote

TO SAMUEL SMITH, ESQ. M. P. WOOD HALL PARK.

From "Muncaster Castle, Cumberland, Oct. 1, 1818.

"My dear Friend,

I should be strongly urged to take up my pen to write

to you, were it only to satisfy the feelings which are daily produced in me as I revisit the various scenes of this delightful country, over which you and I rambled two-and-forty years ago. What reason, my dear friend, have we both to consider as addressed to ourselves the injunction of Holy Scripture, 'Thou shalt remember all the way which the Lord thy God led thee these forty years!' but there the parallel ceases, for the passage goes on 'through the wilderness,' whereas both to you and to me, (as you I doubt not are as ready to admit as I am,) life has been any thing but a wilderness. In truth it has not been a country flowing with milk and honey only, but with every other benefit and enjoyment which the heart of man could wish for, and more than any would be presumptuous enough to request. You may conceive on reflection what interesting recollections are called forth in my breast, when I recall to mind the scenes we visited, the objects which then engaged our minds, the conversation which passed between us, (I am now within a very few miles of Wastdale Head, the valley in which we slept, or rather passed the night, in the same wooden crib after piercing through the Gorge of Borrodale,) and then when I proceed to review the long line of subsequent events, what do I see, but the continual bounty of the great Ordainer of all things? What reason have I to adopt the language of the psalmist, 'Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life!' I cannot but add, Oh that my gratitude were more commensurate with the vast and unceasing kindness and long-suffering (for long-suffering also I must add) of my unwearied Benefactor! But how I am running on! I have abundantly proved the truth of the remark with which I opened, that I was stimulated to write to you by my feelings alone. Farewell, my dear friend, and believe me,

Yours sincerely and affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Another letter, dated the same day, is an instance of

the various claims upon his thoughts which found him out at Muncaster as surely as in London.

“Muncaster Castle, Oct. 1, 1818.

“My dear Macaulay,

K——, a young man who was rakish and in distress, is now stopping in Madeira, on his way to the East Indies. He now professes to be penitent; praises Doddridge's *Rise and Progress*, &c. I hope all may be well, but dare not be too sanguine. Will you mention him, and forward the enclosed, to some pious man (Edwards I think is the name) resident in Madeira, who, if K. be really religiously impressed, may help to kindle the smoking flax.

I am ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.”

“Spent the following week at Keswick—visited Southey, who very pleasing, light as a bird in body, and till the loss of his son, I hear his flow of spirits astonishing. He is a man of extraordinary method and punctuality; hence booksellers love to have to do with him. His library excellent; filled with curious Spanish and Portuguese manuscript volumes. He allots one time (before breakfast) to poetry, another to history, and so on. His *History of Brazil* is that to which he looks for fame. He is kind, hospitable, generous, virtuous, and I hope, religious, but too hasty in his judgments, and too rash in politics. Hence he would be a dangerous counsellor, though an able defender.”

“R. and S. got to Rydale on Thursday night, and are staying with the Wordsworths. I heard just before I went, that the daughters of a shopkeeper who had lately returned to Keswick with an acquired fortune had set up a Sunday school. I called on them and gave them £2 for it, and encouraged them. The vicar would not join, though they are churchwomen. I was much inclined to stay till Monday in order to see after the school on Sunday, but could not send for the two boys to us. I tried to urge —— to religious efforts for the town, but

could not prevail on him; he pleaded want of time, no co-operators, &c. I long to settle there and try to do some good, though I see the difficulties great. On the 22d a Bible meeting is to be held, Richmond having written to the Dissenting minister—not well judged. It caused me much pain and self-reproach afterwards that I had not fixed to stay over Sunday. May God forgive me. O let us yield to the still small voice, and make doing religious good overbear at once all other considerations.”

“Southey with us—much delighted with him.” What Southey thought of him may be told in his own words. “I saw more of your father during his short residence in this country, than at any or at all other times; and certainly I never saw any other man who seemed to enjoy such a perpetual serenity and sunshine of spirits. In conversing with him you felt assured that there was no guile in him; that if ever there was a good and happy man on earth, he was one; and that, eminently blessed as he was with a benign and easy disposition, the crown of all his blessings was that inward and undisturbed peace which passeth all understanding.

“I recollect one circumstance during his visit to the Lakes, which shows the perfect reliance his servants had upon his good nature,—forbearance it might have been called in any other person, but in him it was no effort. The coachman came in to say that some provision concerning the horses had been neglected, and your father with a little start of surprise, replied, ‘that indeed he had not thought of it.’ ‘No!’ said the coachman, and ‘since you have been in this country, you have all of you been so lake, and valley, and river, and mountain mad, that you have thought of nothing that you ought to have thought of.’”

His summer rambles and the expedition to the Lakes had not withdrawn the thoughts of Mr. Wilberforce from his Haytian and West Indian clients. Before he left the neighbourhood of London he was preparing to make an effort in their favour at the approaching Congress at Aix la Chapelle; and urged Mr. Stephen “to

prepare something for Lord Castlereagh's perusal while yet in this country, to which we may refer, and which may predispose him to the cause of Hayti." All his plans for this purpose failed.

The refusal to acknowledge Christophe's independence produced consequences most injurious to Hayti. There was no measure which was urged more constantly by Mr. Wilberforce in all his intercourse with Christophe, than that he should reduce his army. "I fear lest his own troops should leave him; and I long to wean him from his hankering after the conquest of the Haytian republic." But until his independence was acknowledged, he must maintain his troops to guard against a French invasion; and though this necessity led, as Mr. Wilberforce too truly prophesied, to his ultimate destruction, "he defended his measures in so masterly a manner, that no crowned head in Europe could send forth a letter more creditable either to the understanding or principles of its author."

His own share meanwhile in these counsels was often full of perplexity. His correspondence with Christophe and his ministers was sufficiently laborious; and the general superintendence of the emigrants to Hayti, was sure to cause him disappointment and annoyance. Parties must be chosen from all ranks of life—professors for the royal college, physicians and divines, governesses for the royal daughters, tutors for his sons, down to ordinary teachers of a common school, and "two ploughmen and their ploughs and families." They went into a land where the whole tone of society was utterly demoralized, and vice in no degree disgraceful; and though he inquired most cautiously, scrutinized most closely, and chose at last the best who offered, numbers of these could not stand the trial. The professors quarrelled with each other; some by open vices disgraced the cause they were designed to further; some were carried off by dissoluteness and disease; whilst the few who laboured faithfully found their hands weakened in their single striving against the multitude of evil-doers, and added often, by their desponding letters, to the common burden

of this most oppressive correspondence. Still he went on with his labours cheerfully and never fainted in them, so long as the opportunity of service lasted.

When his family party had broken up at Rydale, he had been compelled to travel in a different direction from the rest; and on the 24th of October he wrote to Mrs. Wilberforce from Cambridge—"I thank God I am arrived at this place in safety, making up near 350 miles which I have travelled, full 100 of them at night, without a single accident. How grateful ought I to be for this protecting providence of a gracious God! And I just now recollect in a most natural connexion, that tomorrow, the 25th of October, is the anniversary of the day on which I experienced that notable escape from being drowned in the Avon, when we lodged at Bath Easton. Praise the Lord, O my soul. I forget the year; do tell it me if you remember, by a mother's calendar."

"Sunday. Lest I should not be able to write in the evening, I take up my pen now, (three-quarters past two) though I shall to-day write but little, having had very little time to myself this morning before church. My heart would be very sad, but for the blessed prospects that are opened to the eye of faith—even the faith of an unworthy sinner. I hope it will be the effect of these earthly sufferings to wean me from this world, and fix my affections and desires more on that better state, where sorrow and sighing will have fled away. However I will not open any chapter of grievances this day, and I am ready to burn what I have written, on account of its being in any other strain than that of thankfulness. Oh what cause for gratitude have I: no man surely so great, at least very few! My spirits are not in themselves so cheerful as they used to be, but it is one of my many mercies that they are so good as they are. I suppose the mental sky of every one has its 'dim passing cloud that just tempers the ray.' Stephen comes here to-day. Dear fellow; his kindness, like that of the dean, is as lively as if it were ever so short an effort, and as persevering as if it were ever so parsimoniously exerted.

No man could ever have more cause for thankfulness to the Giver of all good for the many kind friends He has vouchsafed me. Farewell. Commending you to the best blessings of God,

I am ever yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

On the 24th of December he was again at Kensington, surrounded by his family; and the new year opens with some striking resolutions of devoted service, in his usual tone of deep humility. "It is with a heavy heart that I look forward to the meeting; so many friends absent, and so many objects of pursuit, and I so unequal to them; yet had I duly used my powers I could do much. O Lord, do Thou quicken and guide me. I have resolved to dine out scarcely at all during this season."

"Jan. 15th. What is it to have our views spiritual when we are in our closets, unless we also retain and carry about with us the sense of invisible things, and the desire to please our unseen, but present Saviour, looking up to Him for grace and strength! O Lord, enable me thus to live, and may I practise self-examination more constantly, that I may watch myself in this important particular."

His daily occupations differed so little from those of the preceding spring, that the copious transcripts of his Diary at that time will render needless any but a few of the most interesting extracts of the present season. Some of these throw a strong light upon his character. "I thank you for your truly friendly conduct," is his answer to a friend who had transmitted to him the censures of another on his conduct, "and I beg you to join my dear and excellent brother-in-law in helping me to correct my own infirmities; as you have so often kindly borne with them. For this end the first step will always be to tell me of my faults, and I trust I can truly say I shall love you the better for so doing, and even if I do not think you right I shall be sure that your motive was friendly. You must also flap me and rouse and aid my decaying memory. Poor dear Babington! I miss him often in this way."

These were not idle words. In presenting on the 9th of February a petition from the Quakers against the severe enactments of our penal code, he expressed his deep regret for the loss of that great man who had made this subject his especial study. This warm and feeling language drew on him a remonstrance for having termed Sir Samuel Romilly "a great and good man." "Had a truly honest and Christian-like letter from Mr. Poynder," is the humble entry of his Diary, "to which I replied I trust in the same strain, on my eulogium on Sir Samuel Romilly. Perhaps I went too far, though the newspaper made me say more than I did. But, alas, I well know how often I am led into saying what I never meant! How can I but add the above," he continues, "when I am fresh from the House of Commons, where most unaccountably, except from my not having at all meditated before-hand what I should say, I am told, and I fear justly, notwithstanding some opposite assurances, that I was extremely harsh against Castlereagh. How strange this! I really have a personal regard for him, have always wished, and do now wish him well, and did not in the least mean to be severe, especially against *him*. He had no interest in preventing the inquiry. However, may God forgive me, and enable me to act in a way more agreeable to my Christian character of peace, and love, and meekness. I am truly and deeply hurt by the consciousness, though quite relieved by a few friendly words which passed between Castlereagh and me in going out of the House."

From the prominent part always allotted him at the anniversary of Religious societies he greatly shrunk. No man ever attended them with a simpler or more fervent spirit, or entered therefore with more feeling into all their true excellence. "There really is in such a scene," he writes to a friend, "a moral sublimity, which, if duly estimated, would be worthy of the tongues of angels; and indeed, I doubt not, they who are declared by our blessed Lord to sympathize with the poorest, repenting, earthly sinner, do participate in the joy and thankfulness which are called forth in our Christian assemblies, in hearing of

the general diffusion of the word of God, and of the labours, and sufferings, and blessed be God the triumphs also, of those zealous missionaries who are devoting their lives in distant lands to the service of their Divine Master."

Never perhaps was his eloquence more winning than when on these subjects it flowed fresh from his full heart—and many a stranger to the ordinary excitements of the town returned at the week's end into the country nerved by it afresh for his path of solitary labour. "I shall never forget," says one who thus heard him, "the effect of a short speech of his upon my own mind. He was alluding to some natural difficulties which had impeded the success of missions, which ought not to discourage us; for nature seemed often, as well as man, to fight against St. Paul. He was not merely 'scourged with rods,' but 'thrice suffered shipwreck.' The tone, the manner, the voice in which he brought out this simple thought was so overpowering, that I went home with it ringing in my ears for days."

The bustling week began upon the 3d of May, with "Breakfasted Dr. Hamilton (Irish) Owen, Mons. Kieffler from Paris, Mons. De Solles, (stating the friendly disposition of the present French government to our Bible Society,) and to Methodist Mission Society, where a full meeting—afterwards Church Missionary House—eat cold meat—and House—Catholic Question.

"4th. Church Missionary anniversary. Dear Lord Gambier in the chair, and closed with a hymn after opening with a prayer. I spoke warmly, and so pretty well. Mr. Matthias from Dublin very good. Delightful meeting. Lodgings and writing, when I recollected Lottery Resolutions. Hurried down to the House, and found Van concluding his defence of Lotteries against Lyttleton, who I heard had spoken long and ably. I drawing up Canning, the debate became lively and warm. Poor Canning—how grievous it is to hear him so unjust to his own real kindness of heart, as to attempt to turn into ridicule the story of distress told by Buxton with great effect!

"5th. Several breakfasters. Bible Society anniversary. Charles Shore spoke with fascinating tenderness. I was called on suddenly, but D. G. did pretty well. Then cold meat—and Downing Street. Then House.

"11th. Naval and Military Bible meeting. House. Lord Camden's generous gift to the public, and Tierney acknowledged it very handsomely. It is a sad proof of the low moral tone of the world, that people in general say, 'More fool he.' Then Bill for protecting the New Zealanders and Otaheitans."

"15th. British and Foreign School Society. Duke of Kent in the chair. Oh how glad I am that the tenth meeting is this day over! The consumption of time is really too great." "Would it had been my favoured lot," writes Hannah More, "to hear one of twelve speeches in ten days." The wonder is, how with his feeble health he stood such constant fatigue. A house crowded with "inmates" . . . their number swelled every morning by a tide of "breakfasters" . . . then a throng of "callers"—a crowded meeting at which he made often a long, always an animated speech—then a budget of letters to be read and answered—his only rest or food a "canistered" dinner; and then House, where he sat long, and sometimes spoke again, not getting home till "all were gone to bed." It is not a little striking, to turn to some of his letters to his children, written in the midst of such a life as this, often at hurried intervals when waiting for an audience at an office, or some such scrap of time; ("for I always take the raw material with me to such places, and work it up into the manufactured article as opportunity permits;") but showing even in their fair and legible characters how much he consulted the feelings of those to whom he wrote. A sample or two of this correspondence, maintained once a week at least with each of his absent children, will best show his tone of mind.

"My dear ——,*

I stop at a friend's house in London solely to write to

* Aged 13.

you a few lines; sincerely concerned at my having been so engrossed by a host of callers, as not to secure a single quarter of an hour secure from interruption to converse by pen and ink with my very dear absent child. Yet as when you were a little boy I used to delight in taking a passing kiss of you, so now it is quite gratifying to exchange a salutation with you on paper, though but for a minute or two. The sight of my hand-writing will call forth in my dear affectionate — all those images of parental and family tenderness, with which the Almighty permits us to be refreshed, when children and parents are far separated from each other. You have a heavenly Father too, my dearest boy, who loves you dearly, and who has promised He will never leave you nor forsake you, if you will but devote yourself to His service in His appointed way. O my dearest boy, pray in earnest; guard against formality in prayer. Endeavour to place yourself as it were in the presence of God when you call upon Him. Again and again, may God bless and preserve you, and grant you His Holy Spirit, and a disposition to deny yourself. But I must break off; somebody has been talking to me almost all the time I have been writing, so if there are mistakes excuse them; and believe me ever,

Yours most affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

TO THE SAME.

"My dearest —,

The last letter from home communicated to you the death of one young friend, my present letter will convey the account of an event still less to be expected; that of the death of poor B. Poor young man, he sadly disappointed all his real friends, not only by failing in his studies, but also I fear by a licentious course of conduct. Suddenly he was thrown on a bed of sickness. Mercifully God gave him some days for repentance, and we are not without hope he may have found mercy, for he was very penitent. But, alas! dependence on a death-

bed repentance, is a sad dependence indeed! O my dear boy, may you remember your Creator in the days of your youth; then whether you live or die, all will be well. Farewell, my very dear —, I am sadly hurried, but I would not omit writing to you to-day.

I am ever your affectionate father,

W. WILBERFORCE."

TO THE SAME.

"My dearest —,

I have not either time or eye-sight to-day sufficient to send you what from its size, may deserve the name of a letter; but a letterling it may be called, and you know the old passage, *Inest sua gratia parvis*—a maxim which, from my not being myself of extravagantly large dimensions, I may be supposed to consider a very reasonable proposition. I am glad to find (and it is quite a drop of balm in my heart when I hear of my dear boy's going on well) that you are setting to work doggedly, as Dr. Johnson used to term it; but I like neither the word nor the idea. I hope my dear boy will act from a higher principle than one which I have seen in a poor animal in a team, when the *taste* of the wagoner's whip has made him resolutely set all his muscular force in action, and pull up a steep as if determined to master it. But my dearest — will be prompted by a nobler set of motives; by a desire of pleasing God and showing his gratitude to his Saviour, and not grieving the Holy Spirit; of giving pleasure to a father and mother who are watching over his progress with tender solicitude. I have been looking over some old papers till my heart is not a little affected. How year passes away after year, and first one person is snatched away and then another! Little did I expect I should outlive so many much more robust, and many of them younger than myself. But to persons of your age as well as mine, the lesson is read, 'Be thou also ready.' And then, my dearest boy, 'we shall never part, if we have made our calling and election sure; we shall never again be in the storm, but re-

main for ever in the enjoyment of the pleasures which are at God's right hand for evermore. I remembered that you would receive this on a Sunday, and therefore permitted myself to fall into a serious strain. Indeed I am always tempted to sing in this key when I am addressing one of my absent children, because loving them so dearly I am naturally drawn into the discussion of those topics in which their best interests are concerned. Above all things, my dear —, attend to your private devotions. Beware of wandering thoughts. If you do but pray in earnest, I am *sure* all will be well. May God bless and preserve you. Poor — has suffered grievously from the bite of a gnat: her arm from the shoulder to the finger has been greatly inflamed, but D. G. she is now getting better. I remember Dr. Clarke says, the Russian soldiers often die from the bites of gnats in the country bordering on the Crimea; and yet it used to be said, that 'You flay a Muscovite to make him feel.' God bless you, my dearest —.

Ever your affectionate father,

W. WILBERFORCE."

CHAPTER X.

Death of Miss Martha More—Disturbances among the lower orders—
Death of Dean Milner—Queen's case.

HE closed the labours of the session by moving on the 7th an address to the Regent on the suppression of the Slave Trade, by which he hoped to quicken the exertions of our government, and produce some effect on France.

During the recess of parliament he made an excursion with his family to the West of England, and the Valley of the Wye. His letters prove him to have retained all his enthusiastic love for the beautiful scenery and delightful associations into which he was introduced;

yet even here he did not neglect the subjects so dear to his heart. "I understand that the C.'s have resolved to go to Hayti, and I own I am glad of it. It absolves me from all responsibility, while it obtains for Hayti the services of people, who I hope may be useful, though I dare not in conscience rely on the morality of persons in whom I have no reason to believe there is a deep principle of religion, when they are going into a country where vice is not discreditable. But, my dear Stephen, I cannot tell you how deeply I feel the not having taken more pains to promote the religious and moral improvement of that interesting people. In this instance, as, alas, in so many others, I find myself at once comforted by the blessed assurances of pardon from God, who delighteth in mercy through the atonement and intercession of our great Mediator and Advocate, while I am at the same time supplied with the most powerful of all motives, gratitude and generous shame, to exert myself with augmented earnestness for the time to come. I wish beyond measure you could help me in getting some school-mistresses, and also some missionaries, though the latter must be men of uncommon prudence and moderation.

"We stay here D. V. till Monday se'nnight, and then I believe shall fix for a week or so at Malvern. O how I wish I could yet do any good before I am called away! Of the uncertainty of life we have just now had a fresh instance in the death of Mrs. Patty More. Never was there a more generous, benevolent creature, more self-denying to herself, or kind to others; and her natural tempers, blessed be God, were sanctified by just views of religion, or rather by that Divine Spirit which produced and confirmed them." "Patty sat up with me," he says in his Diary, "till near twelve, talking over Hannah's first introduction to a London life, and I, not she, broke off the conference; I never saw her more animated. About eight in the morning when I came out of my bed-room I found Hannah at the door—'Have you not heard Patty is dying? They called me to her in great alarm,' at which from the ghastliness of her appearance I could not wonder. About two or three

hours after our parting for the night, she had been taken ill." She lingered for about a week.

His various wanderings are pleasantly retraced in a letter to another friend. "My summer, which began late, has been spent almost entirely with various friends;—the Noels, at my old haunt at Barham Court, near to which you once endured the labours, if not the dangers of war (on Cox Heath;)—my valuable old friend, Mrs. Hannah More, whom we the rather visited, because we deemed it but too probable that if we should not see her this summer we might never see her alive in another; and such is the uncertainty of life, that we witnessed the death-bed, and nearly the actual departure of her younger and stronger sister—then we spent a few days at the romantic and beautiful seat, Blaize Castle, of my friend Mr. Harford; and afterwards a fortnight with the Bishop of Gloucester, whom I heartily wish you could hear and see, both in his public ministrations and in his private life; he is really what a bishop should be—for humility, industry, zeal with sobriety, hospitality, and above all for love in all its kinds and directions, he is really a bright specimen; and the veneration and affection that are felt for him by all who know him, even by those who do not entirely concur with him in religious principles, are seen beaming from every countenance, and sparkling in every eye. He practically remembers the motto of old Archbishop Usher's seal ring—*Væ mihi si non evangelizavero*. On the week-days he visits different country parishes, whence the income of his deanery is derived, and collects round him as crowded congregations as are usually found in a well-frequented church. Then we were seduced into spending near a fortnight at Malvern, having visited it with the intention of merely a twenty-four hours' cursory survey. For the recovery of an invalid, or for the means of enabling an old man to toddle up the mountains (not quite Himalayans) without fatigue or even effort, it is by far the first of all English elysiums. Then we spent a little time with Mrs. W.'s widowed mother, whence I paid a second short visit to a sweet lady friend to meet, by his and her

urgent desire, the Duke of Gloucester for a few days en ami, (must I not be an inch or two taller for the distinction ?")

All his letters were now tinged by one subject. Much popular disturbance had occurred in the manufacturing districts. "Let me beg you," he asks a friend at Sheffield, "when you write to give me all the information you can concerning the state of mind of your lower orders, and particularly whether the religious part of your community has in these trying times been acting worthy of its high calling. I declare my greatest cause of difference with the democrats, is their laying, and causing the people to lay, so great a stress on the concerns of this world, as to occupy their whole minds and hearts, and to leave a few scanty and lukewarm thoughts for the heavenly treasure. * * It really provokes me to a degree of indignation greater I fear than Christianity warrants, to look forward to what may happen to this highly favoured country from our internal divisions. Party, party is our bane. I feel I think much as Lord Falkland did when he used to stalk about his tent and exclaim, Peace, Peace."

The worst feature of the disaffected was their zeal against the Christian faith. "What your lordship and I saw," he reminds Lord Milton, "amongst the papers of the Secret Committee, gave me but too much reason to fear that the enemies of our political constitution were also enemies to our religion." "Heretofore they inveighed against the inequality of property, and used every artifice to alienate the people from the constitution of their country. But now they are sapping the foundations of the social edifice more effectually by attacking Christianity. The high and noble may be restrained by honour; but religion only is the law of the multitude."

In this spirit he entered the House on the first day of the session; and then, on the 26th, when he "spoke with effect though without premeditation," he maintained forcibly the cause of order. He arraigned the irreligious spirit of this new morality, proved that the bar of the House of Commons was the most improper place for an

inquiry into the behaviour of the magistrates, and turning upon those who showed some inclination to reap a factious triumph from the sufferings of their country—"Can there be one man here," he asked, "who does not from his heart lament these transactions? If there be, it must be one who has learned to look to civil war and slaughter for the regeneration of the country, and to regard the overthrow of our religion and our laws as the means of accomplishing their end."

Throughout the stormy session which succeeded, his language was the same. He esteemed "the situation of the country very critical, and though" he "had no small reason to complain of some members of administration," he "thought it" his "duty to come forward in support of the several measures which were proposed for the preservation of the public peace."

"We are in a state of almost combustion," he complains amidst nightly contentions, "which does not suit me as well as it did thirty years ago—

'Calidus juvenis
Consule Planco.' "

In the hot fit
Of youth and Pitt.

Yet his own mind was quiet in the storm. The next day's Diary affords a glimpse of those deep waters which no political tempests could disturb. "Walked from Hyde Park corner, repeating the 119th Psalm, in great comfort." His learning this whole psalm by heart in all his London bustle, is a striking instance of the care with which he studied the Holy Scripture; and in spite of his complaints, his memory could not have been materially injured, since he could (even with the help of a technical artifice which he now frequently employed) acquire and retain perfectly this long and unconnected passage. To return to the Diary.

"Dec. 14th. Not a minute alone to-day. Money with me during dressing. Then Mr. Scott about the wool tax. Then African institution—Duke of Glouces-

ter there, and Lord Lansdown. Then House—Lord John Russell's motion. He spoke pleasingly—Lord Normanby seconded with more talent, though Romeo-like. Alas! I get no time to myself. To-night Arms Seizing Bill; doubtful what course to pursue, as to whether one or two justices, and by night as well as day; decided for former, on ground of publicity, and the clause requiring time being given, and that in 1812 the same power was given and no abuse followed. O Lord, enable me to decide aright. Blessed be God, I serve a Master who takes the will for the deed."

"Several press me strongly to bring forward a committee to inquire into and relieve the distresses of the lower orders. I am much puzzled about it. Sir W. De Crespigny's motion to refer Owen's plan to a committee. I forced to speak against it on the Christian ground.

"17th. Found Owen of Lanark truly placable and good-humoured; he said Vansittart and I right in voting against him." He was no advocate for "a system of morals or instruction not founded on religion." "They would exclude," he complains of such instructors, "religion from life, and substitute knowledge in its stead." "It is only by educating our people in Christian principles, that we can hope to advance in strength, greatness, and happiness. By their efficacy alone can we escape the operation of those causes, which have assimilated other states to the human frame in its infancy, manhood, and decay. But the religion of those states was founded on false principles. They went on from stage to stage of intellectual improvement, emerging from ignorance to knowledge, till the light of day beamed upon the fabric, and betrayed the rotten imposition upon which it was built. The pillar of our greatness is raised upon that basis of all intellectual and moral improvement, the Christian religion."

The year 1820 opened with an unexpected calm. The restrictive Acts of the preceding session, and the clearing of the commercial gloom, quieted the angry spirit of that stormy period. A busy session seemed to be at hand; when the unexpected death of George III. suspended

public business, and dissolved the parliament. Mr. Wilberforce's spring passed in its usual employments, marked only by two domestic features; the marriage of his eldest son, and the lingering and fatal illness of his early friend, Dean Milner, of Carlisle. He came to Kensington Gore, to attend as usual, on the Board of Longitude; and after five weeks of suffering illness, breathed his last upon the 1st of April.

Many were the hours he gave to soothing the sick-bed of his friend. Though his life had been spent so much in public, he was no stranger to such scenes; and never was the genuine tenderness which filled his heart more beautifully shown than in these unwitnessed charities. More than one touching instance may be quoted from the private memoranda of a friend, who was at this time a frequent inmate in his family. At the close of one of his days of hurry, perhaps after the stormy contests of the House of Commons, "between twelve and one o'clock he heard that his daughter, who was ill, could get no sleep. Coming into her room, he took her hand, and, kneeling down by the bed, spoke of the tender shepherd carrying the weak and lame in his bosom to warm and cherish them. Then he applied this to our blessed Saviour; spoke of His tenderness and love; how He would feel for His dear suffering child, and conduct her all the way she had to go, until He took her from this scene of trial and sorrow to a world where sorrow and sighing shall flee away—"a beautiful personification, indicating their haste to leave the mansions of the blessed." In this spirit he prayed with her, and never left the bed until her spirit was visibly soothed and supported."

One other extract shall be given. On the 24th of May he "went down to Paul's Cray, honest Simons's, where a great party at his school-fete. Gerard Noel gave us a beautiful sermon. Lord and Lady Jocelyn, Charles Noel, Lady E. Whitbread, and various friends." He was all sunshine at such times, from principle as well as habit. "It is a fault to be silent; every one is bound to present his contribution to the common stock of conversation and enjoyment;" and wherever the group was the most

crowded and attentive, he was sure to be found its centre. From all this he stole away, and “asked me” (to quote from the same memoranda) “to walk with him down the village. It was to visit a poor woman, of whom he had heard as in a deep decline. He found out the sick-room, and sat down by the bed, and began to speak to her of the love of God, which should dwell in his children’s hearts. ‘Ask yourself then, do *you* love him. We know how love to our fellow-creatures acts; how it makes us try to please them, bear for their sakes unpleasant or unkind things, pain or hard words with patience. Now does your love to God act in this way? Do you bear patiently what he sends you, *because* he sends it? It is no proof of love to God to do what pleases us, to come for instance, as I have done to-day, to see all those dear children in the society of friends I love. But if you submit to your illness, and give up your will to God’s will; if you seek to listen to His voice in this affliction, if you are patient under your sufferings, and gentle to those about you, this will indeed be a proof of love to God. And then think of the happy consequence. He will come and abide with you, and bring such peace and joy into your hearts as none else can bestow. The Comforter will come and dwell with you; not pay you a short visit as I am now paying to my friends here, but dwell with you, and never leave you. Now this is the joy I wish for you.’ And then he knelt down, and asked of God to comfort and support her, and after all her sufferings bring her to a world of peace and joy, where the former things shall have passed away. ‘It is delightful to me,’ he said as we returned, ‘to visit such a bed of sickness, to be able to take one ray of joy from the full sunshine of the social circle, to gild her sick-room. It has been one of the happiest days I ever spent.’”

“Went,” he says, on the 26th of April, “to Freemasons’ Tavern Committee-room, and afterwards to the Hall on the Duke of Kent’s Statue proposal. I seconded the first resolution—kept there latish. I am much pressed to attend the London Missionary Society, but I cannot

do it. Last year I was at eight or nine of these public meetings in as many days, but I must not this year." He attended four or five, and was the charm of each one where he took a part, doing, according to his own account, "pretty well, and every body very kind to me." "But oh how humbled am I to find still in myself solicitude about human estimation! Yet I strive against it, and despise myself for it. O Lord, help me." No one perhaps was ever freer from this fault; but his rigid scrutiny detected in himself the smallest rising of the tempers he condemned. "I should like you," Mr. Stephen said to him when he was once depreciating himself,* "to write a life of yourself, and I would write another; and it would be curious to see the different renderings which would be given to the self-same facts." "To one of these meetings," says the friend, whose memoranda have before been quoted, "I went with him, and arrived before the room began to fill. He walked round, looking at the portraits which hung around the walls, and his spirits seemed unusually depressed; after a time, he burst forth into expressions of his grief and self-abasement, at his remembrance of some scenes of revelling, in which, though never given to excess, he had joined in early life within that very room—'To what a different use, thank God, are we now about to put it!'"

Nothing can surpass the depth of his habitual humility, "Alas," he exclaims, "how unprofitable a servant I am, if I compare myself with M.! How unspeakably am I humbled! In every particular he excels and in every one I fall short: natural powers make some difference, but the want of Christian exertion makes ten times more. Oh God forgive me. I find my body as well as mind indicating weakness, soon tired, and requiring rest. Alas! that I have not better used my faculties! God be merciful to me a sinner. Oh what cause have I to say

* The occasion is too good to be omitted. "I was so small of stature when a youth," was his account, "that Milner put me on a table to read to the boys." Mr. Stephen interrupted him, "Why, Wilberforce, Milner himself has told me that it was that your elocution might be a model to the school."

this! O they do not know us as we know ourselves. Lord help me. I should despair but for the precious promises of Holy Scripture. Yet in spite of this lowly estimate of both his powers and services, no slight labours were at this very moment before him.

The arrival of the Queen introduced a new and fearful excitement amidst the subsiding waves of civil strife.

His part was at once taken. Though he expressed his fears that "she had been very profligate," he "resolved if possible to prevent the (parliamentary) inquiry, an object which could only be accomplished by such an amicable adjustment as should give to neither party cause for triumph. When therefore Lord Castlereagh had made a motion to refer the papers to the consideration of a secret committee, I endeavoured to interpose a pause during which the two parties might have an opportunity of contemplating coolly the prospect before them. What followed is before the world—the correspondence and subsequently the conferences which took place between the King's servants and the Queen's law-officers. The concessions made by the King's servants, as Mr. Brougham afterwards declared in the House of Commons, were many and great. The name and rights of a Queen were granted to her majesty without reserve, any recognition of which had formerly been carefully avoided. A Royal Yacht, a frigate, &c. were offered. It was agreed that her name and rank should be notified at the court either of Rome or Milan, the capitals of the countries in which she had expressed her intention to reside: and that an address should be presented to the Queen, no less than another to the King, to thank her majesty for having acceded to the wish of the House of Commons.* During the anxious interval which followed he was far from idle. He sent his son with an earnest letter to the King, in which he entreated him to restore the Queen's name to the Liturgy, "suggesting the ferment which would be occasioned; that the country would be in a fury, and perhaps the soldiers might take the Queen's part." The course he pursued in these trying circum-

* Memorand. among papers.

stances, he well knew, exposed him to extreme odium and misconstruction. But in the "hope of averting a great evil" he laboured unceasingly to mediate between the parties. He was one of the committee of the House which presented an address to her majesty, who "decidedly rejected our mediation." This failure drew on him all the abuse he had expected. He was charged with trifling with the House of Commons and attempting to deceive the people. The calmness with which he met this contumely and the secret of his great confidence is shown by the following letter to his family, who were absent at the sea-side. "I am often prompted by the injustice and unfairness of men to look upward, and to say to myself, well, the time will come when He will make thy righteousness as clear as the light, and thy just dealing as the noon-day. I got the nineteen Sunday newspapers, once for all, the other day, that I might the better judge of their contents: and assuredly such a collection of ribaldry and profaneness never before disgraced my library, and I trust never will again. Of course many of the writers honour me with a peculiar share of attention. But this will soon blow over, and by and by all the well disposed part of the community will do me justice, and above all, *tho' Lord will protect.* This is as fine a summer's day as I ever knew, and I have been quite delighting in the garden. What a pity it is that you all do not enjoy it more! I never saw the weeping willow so fine as it is this year. I wish I could transplant myself to you and my dear children who occupy their place in the group that my fancy draws of you all upon the sands. Ask the boys if it be a good place for crabbing."

"I ought to be thankful," he tells Mrs. Wilberforce, "that I have lately felt a comfortable consciousness that I am in the hands of God. The 71st Psalm, which I learned by heart lately, has been a real comfort to me. Cobbett has been publishing a very clever letter to me, full, as you may suppose, of falsehood and mischief. Well! remember good old Luther, in worse times, when assailed by enemies who could burn as well as write."

He reasons on this passing odium as calmly as if it had attacked some one else. "I am doubtful about moving an Address on the Slave Trade. I greatly doubt the wisdom of bringing on these questions now, because the public mind is engrossed with the Queen's business, and because I am unpopular out of doors, though not in the House. What a lesson it is to a man not to set his heart on low popularity, when after forty years' disinterested public service I am believed to be a perfect rascal! Oh what a comfort it is to have to fly for refuge to a God of unchangeable truth and love!"

During a prolonged separation from his family, who were at the sea-side, "I think," he writes to them, "it is good for the mind to feel a little solitary. It more impresses on me the true character of life, which has been to me too uniformly comfortable. Indeed I can say, 'My cup runneth over.' What a beautiful expression!—the passage struck me yesterday, when meditating over the 23d Psalm in the garden."

On the 25th of July, the House of Commons adjourned for a month; and on the 28th he was preparing for his summer's flight. His route to Weymouth took him to the house of an early friend, whose guest he had not been for many years. "So here is William Wilberforce going to visit Henry Banks," his companion overheard him murmur to himself as he drove up to Kingston Hall, "and they are the only two of the old set of whom so much can be said."

His residence at Weymouth was soon interrupted by the threatening aspect of affairs. "The accounts from London are most alarming." In this crisis his interference was requested by men of various parties. Lord John Russell led the way by a letter in the Times of August 5th, "which can hardly fail," says the editor, "to propitiate Mr. Wilberforce, so beneficent is the office which it assigns to him; so flattering, and we will add so just, the tribute both to his virtues and his power."

This step he thought most ill-advised from reasons which he thus imparts to Mr. Buxton. "You must ere now have seen Lord John Russell's curious publication.

I own I am concerned to see the letter, because it sadly obstructs the course of proceeding I had before meditated. It would have been very different if he had in private communicated to me his ideas."

"I do not quite despair of getting the business put off," he tells Mr. Stephen, "though it must be said, that Lord John's letter is a sad obstacle in the way, and one which may perhaps be insuperable." . . "My project was to urge the King to go to the House of Lords, and declare he gives up his own wishes to the gratifying of his people." . . "But how could he hope that I should prevail on the King to accept my mediation, as that of a neutral man, when publicly called upon to come forward by one of the strongest partisans of the opposition?"

"I am divided between the fear on the one hand of neglecting some measure, which by the blessing of God might be the means of arresting our progress into that abyss to which we seem gradually but too surely advancing, and on the other of appearing conceitedly to think of myself more highly than I ought to think, and of thereby injuring the interests of religion. My situation would be very painful if religious principles I hope in part, but still more natural temper and habit, had not lessened the sensibility of my feelings on all terrestrial things. Yet to be told before all the world, that on me and my conduct depends the fate of the empire, is enough to make a man anxious."

The day before this letter reached him, he had "decided that it may be well to be on the spot when the Queen's business is going to begin, that if any opening should present itself, it may be embraced. I go up to try if I can prevent the inquiry. Yet I feel deeply the evil, that so bad a woman as I fear she is should carry the victory by sheer impudence, (if she is guilty,) and assume the part of a person deeply injured. Oh the corrupted currents of this world! Oh for that better world, where there shall be no shuffling."

"Pray for me," he writes back from London to his family, "that I may be enlightened and strengthened for the duties of this important and critical season. Hitherto God has wonderfully supported and blessed

me ; oh how much beyond my deserts ! It will be a comfort to me to know that you all who are, as it were, on the top of the mountain, withdrawn from and above the storm, are thus interceding for me who am scuffling in the vale below."

But matters were too far advanced for any beneficial interference, and he returned after a time to Weymouth, where he was still followed by pressing applications that he should demand an audience of the King, or recommend conciliation to the Queen. One ardent friend, with more zeal than discretion, sent down a messenger "to fetch me up express, and meet him at Salt Hill to have an audience of the King. I positively refused. He had summoned S. and Lord H. from Hastings, who both came ; he himself went to the cottage and conferred with General Thornton, and sent in to the King that he expected me. The King sent a very proper answer : That if he had conferred with me, it must be on some political business, and that he never talked on political subjects with any but his ministers."

Seeing therefore no present opening for usefulness, he remained with his family at Weymouth and at Bath, watching from a distance the advancing trial.

Here a new blow distressed him greatly. On the 9th of December he heard from unquestionable information of the sudden death of Christophe ; and with Christophe he well knew all the plans for the improvement of the Haytiens, which had cost him so much time and labour, must fall to the ground. "I cannot mention Hayti," he says a few days later, "without interposing a word or two concerning this same *tyrant*, as now that he is fallen it seems to be the fashion to call Christophe. If he did deserve that name it is then compatible with the warmest desire in a sovereign for the improvement and happiness of his people ; and I must also add that all the authentic accounts I ever heard of him have led me to believe that he was really a great man, with but few infirmities. Nevertheless I am not much surprised at what has taken place, for I must confess that the yoke of government might probably press heavily upon his people, and that he might carry on his whole system, both in

introducing improvements and in reforming morals, with too much rigour. Again, the military discipline which he enforced, and the great army which he maintained, were necessary to resist the expected invasion from France; and I fear that all kings are apt to be too fond of arms and reviews—of course except the King of Great Britain.”

“I regret,” he said at this time to a friend, “that I did not more press Christian principles upon poor Christophe, and instruct him in the knowledge of a Saviour; yet I was afraid of losing my influence with him by going too far.* I sent him books, and said what I thought I could, but I have been uneasy since; I know not that a day has passed that I have not prayed for him. He has only been charged, as far as I know, with two faults; one, an over-strict enforcement of justice; the other, his being avaricious, and heaping together much money in his capital. But this was for the purpose of buying gunpowder from the Americans, in case France should attack him. He sent me over £6000 to pay schoolmasters, &c.; and I remember his giving a man, whose conduct he approved, 1000 dollars, quite spontaneously. He was a great man, intent on the improvement of his people, but he furnishes a striking instance of the truth, that by too earnestly pursuing a good object you directly defeat it.”

As the meeting of the House approached the political horizon became darker. Mr. Wilberforce returned to London with a heavy heart. “Pray for us,” he said when he left his family, who for his daughter’s health still stayed at Bath; “pray for us who are about to attend parliament, and shall soon be in the heat of the battle.” “I wish I had any thing to call me away to-morrow from the House of Commons. The question before us is a most perplexing one: a choice of evils. But how little these parliamentary affairs will interest me when I look death in the face—except having kept a clear conscience!”

* Vide Correspondence.

On the 26th he "found the question changed by the motion of Lord A. Hamilton, from restoring the Queen's name to the Liturgy, to blaming the leaving it out. Not one in fifty but thought it wrong, and still more foolish, to leave the name out, yet a large majority voted for the previous question. That night I meant to vote for restoring her name, but was forced to go home by illness, though had the division come on a few days before, I should have voted against it, on the ground of the Queen's outrageously contumacious conduct. It is almost rebellious." This concession he thought due to the religious feelings of the great bulk of the middle classes. He found that not only the political Dissenters, but even the Wesleyan Methodists prayed for the Queen by name, and "would not allow that she was prayed for at all, in the words, 'for all the royal family.'" For himself, he had never viewed the omission as involving any religious question, sharing the sentiment expressed by Dr. Parr: "In the words, 'all the royal family,' I include the Queen." But to perpetuate the notion that it was designed to deprive her of the benefit of the people's prayers, was, he thought, so paramount an evil, that on the 13th of February he supported Mr. John Smith's motion for the restoration of her name.

"This exclusion," he maintained, "is a most unhappy circumstance, because it has been the means of introducing a political feeling into the Church. Every religious man has hitherto consoled himself with the reflection, that there is at least one day in the week, when he may forget all his low and vulgar cares, and dismiss from his mind the animosities which disturb the course of human life. On that day the elements of discord ought to be at rest, and every recollection which creates disunion or excites a jarring sentiment should be, if possible, avoided. But at present this unhappy subject is brought under public notice every Sunday, and the wound which might otherwise be healed is kept in a state of constant irritation. Nothing can more tend than such a state of things to bring into discredit an ecclesiastical system sealed with the blood of martyrs, and from

which the Dissenters themselves have derived all the advantages which they enjoy."

"It grieved me more than it ought," he wrote next day, "to differ from many dear friends, but I really could not in conscience forbear to support the motion." "Yet there are those even whom I love, who, if they will not look at me with altered countenance, will yet feel real grief of heart; and I perhaps, even to weakness, feel full as much pain from the consciousness of grieving them. But we must not suffer such considerations to affect our conduct, or even to bias our judgment. Yet it is one of the views in which a better world often presents itself to my mind's eye, and cheers my heart by the prospect, that then there will be no errors, no room for misconstruction, but all will at once recognize the kind intentions of others, and live in the clear and full light of unclouded love and confidence. Oh how trivial will then appear to have been many of those questions which we now contest so warmly!"

CHAPTER XI.

Family Religion—Death of eldest Daughter—Retirement at Marden Park—Death of Lord Londonderry—Letter to former Tutor—Efforts for West India Emancipation.

His domestic character was truly remarkable. It was not merely that the tenderness of his earliest affections was unchilled by a bustling public life, but that there was a careful thoughtfulness as to the effect of little things upon his children's characters which seemed almost incompatible with his incessant occupations. This was now more observable when his sons were growing into manhood. For them he chose, as he had done for himself, (a far severer trial of his principles,) with no eye to

personal ambition. His great wish was to see them useful clergymen, and leaving to themselves entirely the choice of their profession, he watched the little openings of domestic life to give to their minds the bias he desired.

The result was what he wished. Of his four sons, who came of a stock which for twenty-six recorded generations appears not to have produced one clergyman, he lived to see two in Holy Orders, and a third preparing for the ministry. His letters to them are full of the same spirit.*

His state of health at this time gave many indications that his parliamentary services must terminate ere long. Several successive attacks of illness made it impossible or dangerous for him to attend the House, and delayed his intended inquiry into the West India system to another year. "I scarcely dare tell you," he writes to Mrs. Wilberforce, "that at one time, thinking I was not likely to be able to speak before Easter, I was actually meditating the cutting and running system without delay; when I recovered, so as to allow me the hope of doing two or three important matters before my departure."

His secret thoughts on his recovery are full of gratitude to God. "What cause have I for thankfulness, that even when ill I scarcely ever experience pain, or distress of body or mind! But then I learn, or rather I re-learn, from this attack, two important practical truths: when I become ever so little incapable of quiet continued reflection I can only gaze at known truths, and look up with aspirations of humble thankfulness to the will of my unwearied and long-suffering Benefactor."

The Easter recess of this year was spent at Bath, after which he resumed his constant attendance on the House, not forgetting his African and West India clients, till the time arrived for retiring into summer quarters. He sold his house at Kensington, and determined upon settling in the country, in compliance with the wishes of his wife and daughter, and in the hope of giving his children "country tastes and occupations, and they are virtuous

* See Correspondence.

pleasures." He settled at Marden Park, in Surrey, and says in a letter to L. Macaulay, Esq., "I am profiting I trust from the quiet life I lead in this sweet place."

Never surely was family religion seen in more attractive colours, than in his house. "I only wish," said a college friend who had been visiting two of his sons, "that those who abuse your father's principles could come down here and see how he lives." It was a goodly sight. The cheerful play of a most happy temper, which more than sixty years had only mellowed, gladdened all his domestic intercourse. The family meetings were enlivened by his conversation—gay, easy, and natural, yet abounding in manifold instruction, drawn from books, from life, and from reflection. Though his step was less elastic than of old, he took his part in out-of-door occupations; climbing the neighbouring downs with the walking parties, pacing in the shade of the tall trees, or gilding with the old man's smiles the innocent cheerfulness of younger pastimes.

In the leisure of the country he meditated literary works of an extensive kind, and hoped to realize the wish of Mr. Babington, "that the evening of your days should shed a mild lustre on your contemporaries and on posterity, harmonizing with the great and important labours of your earlier years." "My whole life of late has been consumed by letters, and by other business which leaves no trace behind. I must endeavour to redeem the time for some useful work. Though the complaint in my eyes has for some years prevented my acquiring knowledge, or even keeping up what I had acquired, yet I hope that I might be able to compose both a religious and a political work, which would not be without value. May God bless to me this scene of quiet."

The execution of these plans was continually hindered by his public occupations. The West India cause exacted all his time. He was at once obliged to begin writing "letters to two members of the American Congress and to the emperor of Russia."

One heavy trial clouded all this summer. The health of his eldest daughter gave him much uneasiness.

As the year advanced her small remaining strength was manifestly sinking, and on the 30th of December she breathed her last at Mr. Stephen's house, whither she had been removed some weeks before, for better medical attendance.

"I have been employed," he tells Mr. Wrangham, "for a long period in attending the sick, and at length the dying bed of a justly beloved grown-up daughter. But the pain of our late trial has been abundantly mitigated by the assured persuasion that she is gone to a better world. It would have been delightful even to those who were not so personally interested in the scene as ourselves, to have witnessed the composure with which, in the prospect of speedy dissolution, our dear child, naturally of a very timid spirit, was able to pray that her parents might be supported under the privation they were about to suffer. I shall never forget the tenderness, and faith, and love, and devotion with which, having desired all others to withdraw, she poured forth her last audible prayer for herself and us." "Sustained by a humble hope of the mercies of God through her Redeemer and Intercessor, she was enabled to bear her sufferings with patience and resignation, and to preserve a composure which even surprised herself. On the very morning of the last day of her life she had desired a favourite female attendant to ask her physician, whether or not there was any hope of her recovery, 'but if not,' she added, 'all is well.' She expired at last like a person falling asleep—scarcely a groan, and not the least struggle. I am almost bound in gratitude to the Giver of all good to call in my friends to rejoice with me over such an instance of Divine goodness, and the consciousness of our dear child's being safe is a cordial of inestimable efficacy."

To Mr. Babington he opens still more freely all the feelings of his heart in the review of this affecting scene. "There was none of that exultation and holy joy which are sometimes manifested by dying Christians. But I know not that my judgment does not rest with more solid confidence on her humble composure and consciousness of

her own unworthiness, with an affectionate casting of herself on her Redeemer and Intercessor. The day before she expired, she sent all out but her mother and me, and concluded some declarations of her humble hope in the mercies of God through Christ with a beautiful prayer addressed to her Saviour. And she had remarked to her mother that she never had before understood the meaning and value of Christ's intercession. My dear friend, I must stop—you are a father."

On the day of his daughter's funeral he was kept at home by the extreme coldness of the weather, and when the band of mourners had set out he went into his solitary chamber to commune with his God. "I went and saw the coffin. How vain the plumes, &c. when the occasion is considered, and the real state of humiliation to which the body is reduced! I must elsewhere note down the mercies and loving-kindnesses of our God and Saviour in this dispensation; above all, the exceeding goodness of giving us grounds for an assured persuasion that all is well with her; that she is gone to glory. When I look back on my past life, and review it, comparing especially the numerous, almost innumerable, instances of God's kindness to me with my unworthy returns, I am overwhelmed, and can with truth adopt the language of the Publican, God be merciful to me a sinner. Every one knows, or may know, his own sins, the criminality of which varies according to his opportunities of improvement, obligations and motives to obedience, advantages and means of grace, favours and loving-kindnesses, pardons and mercies. It is the exceeding goodness of God to me, and the almost unequalled advantages I have enjoyed, which so fill me with humiliation and shame. My days appear few when I look back, but they have been any thing but evil. My blessings have been of every kind, and of long continuance; my being made the instrument of bringing forward the Abolition; my helping powerfully the cause of Christianity in India; my never having been discredited, but being always supported on all public occasions. There would be no end of the enumeration, were I to

put down all the mercies of God. My escape from drowning by a sudden suggestion of Providence. My never having been disgraced for refusing to fight a duel. Then all my domestic blessings. Marrying as late as 36, yet finding one of the most affectionate of wives. Six children, all of them attached to me beyond measure. And though we have lost dear Barbara, yet in the main, few men ever had such cause for thankfulness on account of the love of their children towards them. Then my social blessings. No man ever had so many kind friends; they quite overwhelm me with their goodness, and show the wisdom there has been in my cultivating my friendships with men of my own rank, and remaining quietly in it, instead of trying to rise in life myself, or to make friends among men of rank; above all, the wisdom of selecting religious men for friends. The great and noble now all treat me with respect, because they see I am independent of them, and some I believe feel real attachment to me. Then my having faculties sufficient to make me respectable—a natural faculty of public speaking—though the complaint in my eyes sadly hinders me in acquiring knowledge, and in writing. Then, almost above all, my having been rendered the instrument of much spiritual good by my work on Christianity. How many, many have communicated to me that it was the means of their turning to God! Then all this continued so long, and in spite of all my provocations. These it would be wrong to put down, but my heart knows and feels them, and I trust ever will. And it is a great mercy that God has enabled me to maintain a fair, consistent, external course, so that I never have brought disgrace on my Christian profession. Praise the Lord, O my soul.

“And now, Lord, let me devote myself more solemnly and more resolutely to Thee, desiring more than I ever yet have done to dedicate my faculties to Thy glory and service.”

On the 4th of January Mr. Wilberforce returned with his diminished family to Marden Park; a lease of which

he had purchased ; where his recent loss, as well as his decreasing powers of body, tended to detain him.

But though his bodily strength was visibly impaired, the fire of his spirit was unquenched, and he longed to be still active in his Master's work. "I am sometimes," he told his friends, "quite grieved at the idea of my probably not being able to do a little good yet before I quit the stage ; and the 71st Psalm is strongly impressed upon me, especially the verse, 'Forsake me not when I am old and gray-headed.' Yet perhaps this is in part only another form of selfishness ; and the better feeling that which prompts me to acquiesce entirely in the disposal of God. If my chief object be that His will be done, what signifies it whether it be by me or not ? He can raise up instruments at will, and I may be serving him more acceptably by cheerfully retiring and giving place to younger and more active men."

But he was not yet to close his parliamentary career ; and we find him soon after as busily and anxiously as ever engaged in the great object which was ever nearest his heart. During his retirement he prepared a letter to the Emperor Alexander, on the subject of slavery, intended for general circulation on the continent, and soon after we find him at his place in the House of Commons, participating in the debates both on this subject and Reform. He attended the "Anniversaries" in May, speaking at them all, though sometimes much exhausted. In June of this year he announced to Mr. Stephen his wish that Mr. Buxton or Mr. Whitmore "should take the chief management of the Slave Trade concerns, and let me give occasional assistance, as my indifferent health and infirmities will allow." But while he thus was willing to take for himself the lowest room, he made at this very time a speech upon occasion of moving an address on the subject, which is characterized by Mr. Buxton as "the best he ever heard him make ;" "he poured forth his whole soul on the duty of extending civilization and Christianity to the savage and the heathen."

At Marden Park his family and friends were gathered round him, and he was reading, conversing, writing let-

ters, and composing with all his usual diligence and vigour. He was soon deep in various books. "Ran over Cain—what diabolical wickedness! Looked into Swift's Letters—what a thoroughly irreligious mind—no trace of Sunday to be found in his journals, or Letters to his most intimate friends." "I am going on with Thomas Scott's life in dressing. What a truly great man old Scott was; acting for so many years on the highest principles, not only above money, but above vain-glory, or any other of the idols of men! I always valued him, but now that his character is viewed more distinctly, he really appears to have been a Christian hero. I never saw a book which I should recommend so strongly to the constant study of a minister." "The grand point for imitation, and may we both attend to it," he writes to his eldest son, "is his *integrity*. He was an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile. No consideration of interest, gratification, or credit could make him swerve consciously a hair's breadth from the line of duty. This, depend on it, is the best of all signs. I have often remarked that it has always ended eminently well with those in whom it has been visible. Such a one was Lord Teignmouth. I know no one quality which I always recognize with such heartfelt pleasure in any persons whom I love." Lighter reading occupied the fragments of the evening. "Scott's new poem, Halidon Hill—very beautiful. I have been running over the Fortunes of Nigel, the best, I mean the most moral in its tendency, of any of Walter Scott's stories which I have heard, illustrating the ways of Providence, the character of men of the world, and their unfeeling selfishness."

In the midst of these wholesome domestic occupations he was startled by the news of Lord Londonderry's death. "I am shocked by it," he tells Mr. Stephen. "How strange is it, that though professing to live under the continual recollection of the uncertainty of life, yet when such an event as this takes place, we are as much astonished as if we had expected the man to be as sure of good old age as of his actual existence!"

The particulars of this tragical event had not yet

transpired, but the next day supplied more distinct intelligence. "August 14th. S. brought a report from Croydon that poor Londonderry had destroyed himself. I could not believe it. The Courier, however, and several letters too clearly confirmed it. He was certainly deranged—the effect probably of continued wear and tear of mind. But the strong impression of my mind is, that it is the effect of the non-observance of the Sunday, both as abstracting from politics, from the constant recurrence of the same reflections, and as correcting the false views of worldly things, and bringing them down to their true diminitiveness." "All the time that I have been writing," he concludes a letter this day to Mr. Stephen, "poor Castlereagh has been in my mind. I never was so shocked by any incident. He really was the last man in the world who appeared likely to be carried away into the commission of such an act! So cool, so self-possessed. It is very curious to hear the newspapers speaking of incessant application to business, forgetting that by the weekly admission of a day of rest, which our Maker has graciously enjoined, our faculties would be preserved from the effects of this constant strain. I am strongly impressed by the recollection of your endeavour to prevail on the lawyers to give up Sunday consultations, in which poor Romilly would not concur. If he had suffered his mind to enjoy such occasional remissions, it is highly probable the strings would never have snapped as they did, from over-tension. Alas! alas! poor fellow! I did not think I should feel for him so very deeply."

Though now in comparative repose, he watched anxiously over the progress of his cause, and was sometimes engaged in consultations with the other Abolition leaders; sometimes for whole days in "preparing a most important communication for Lord Bathurst," or in corresponding with the other members of administration. He received "a satisfactory reply from Lord Liverpool," of whom he had demanded "as the head of the government," that the plenipotentiary of Great Britain at the approaching Congress might be "instructed by the

Cabinet," to make the Abolition a point of leading moment. And "if I could prevail on them to instruct our naval officers to take the slave ships of France, I would engage not only to defend the measure in the House of Commons, but to take it on myself as of my own advising."

He wrote at this time, and sent through William Allen to Verona, a letter to the Emperor Alexander, seriously urging him to exert himself. "He does not I hope believe that we are satisfied with him on Abolition grounds. My letter, though civil in terms, was frank in matter, and it plainly intimated that we should have no favourable opinion of his religious or moral character if he did not honestly exert his powers in our behalf."

He had left home in the middle of September, and travelling from house to house, visited many of his friends, each of whom in turn delighted to gather round him their own circle of acquaintance, whilst in addition to these claims of society, a tide of letters overtook him at each halt. Here was no room for idleness. "I thank you most sincerely for your visit," he heard from Mr. Buxton, with whom the series had commenced, "I shall disappoint myself if I do not gather solid benefit from it. I believe I told you how much surprised I was at your industry." His progress led him on to many of his earliest haunts; Elmdon, Rothley Temple, Yoxall Lodge, and Apley, "the house of an honest Tory," were all visited in turn; and many interesting notices are scattered through his Diary. "C. knew Canning well at Eton; he never played at any games with the other boys; quite a man, fond of acting, decent, and moral. Dr. Parr violent against him in public company; says, 'I know the interior of the man, and despise and abhor him.'"

From Cromer Hall he paid Felbrigg a visit, and in its library turned over with great interest many of the books which were "full of Windham's marks." "Windham's mind," he said, "was in the last degree copious, the soil was so fertile, scratch where you pleased, up came white clover. He had many of the true cha-

characteristics of a hero, but he had one great fault as a statesman, he hated the popular side of any question." His companion quoted Pope—

"So much they hate the crowd, that if the throng
Go right by chance, they purposely go wrong."

"It was exactly so," he replied, "and I had a melancholy proof of it in the instance of the Slave Trade. When the Abolition had but few friends, he was all on our side, but as the nation drew towards us, he retreated, and at last on the division in 1807, he was one of the sixteen who voted against us."

"Whilst at S. sat three-quarters of an hour with Robert Hall, who quite himself. He eulogized highly Scott's life, and old Scott himself; especially a sermon he heard from him in Robinson's pulpit from 2 Pet. iii. 'Knowing I must soon put off this tabernacle as the Lord hath showed me.' 'It was a sermon,' he exclaimed repeatedly in a most animated way, 'quite above all criticism.'" "L. off to Birmingham to hear Hall preach to-morrow; I should have liked it, but thought it wrong. In attending public worship we are not to be edified by talent, but by the Holy Spirit, and therefore we ought to look beyond the human agent."

Various incidents in this excursion had revived more than one acquaintance which time had almost obliterated. "The Duke of ——— called on me, and sat for almost three hours. He and I came into life about the same time, though we have seldom met since. Oh what thanks do I owe to a gracious Providence which provided me with such parents, and guided me through such paths as I have trodden!" In two other instances this revival of acquaintance led to a correspondence of unusual interest. One letter was to his college friend Dr. Frewen. "It is always with a sort of melancholy pleasure, that I address an old friend after a long period has elapsed without personal intercourse. The mind naturally casts a backward glance over the retrospect, and in the experience of all there has been some loss or another which renders the review affecting. These emotions have been this

very day called forth by breakfasting with our old friend Carr, whom I had seen but once for above thirty years, and now I am writing to another old friend in very nearly similar circumstances." Dr. Frewen's answer alluded to some coldness which he imagined had grown up between them, ("of which I was quite unconscious,") and led him to take a full and interesting review of his life since the time of their early intercourse.

"Elmdon House, near Coventry, Dec. 6, 1822.

"My dear Sir,

Not a single day has passed since I received your interesting letter, in which I have not wished, I may rather say longed, to answer it. I really am impatient to state to you some, for it would take far more eyesight than I can spare to state all, of the sentiments and feelings you have called forth. But let me begin by expressing that strong confirmation your letter gives to my favourite doctrine, and I must do myself the justice to say practice, when we have to deal with any one of whom we are disposed to think at all favourably, of frankly stating every matter of complaint we conceive ourselves to have against him, instead of suffering it to settle on its lees, if I may use the expression, and acquire augmented strength and colour by being kept within our own bosoms. It is really true, that I was not aware of having exhibited any coldness towards you in my behaviour, and also that I have utterly forgot, if ever I knew, the circumstance in your behaviour toward me, to which you refer, as having originated in a mistake, and from which I am sorry to hear you suffered real pain.

I am pressed for time, and have been so much in the same situation ever since I got your letter that I have not been able to reflect upon it, or by calling up the recollection of long-past incidents to bring before me, if possible, the circumstances to which you allude. You therefore have my first thoughts, though I have had your letter for some days in my possession.

Various are the emotions which the retrospect of my life is calculated to produce in me; but those of thank-

fulness for the wholly undeserved, and yet multiplied mercies and bounties of God are, I hope, uppermost. You cannot but remember, what I can never review but with humiliation and shame, the course I ran at college, and during the three or four first years of my parliamentary life which immediately succeeded it. Yet in justice to myself it is only fair to state, that at least as much pains had been taken by my nearest relatives and guardians to make me dissipated and vain, and though they did not mean it, vicious also, as are commonly used to counteract these dispositions; and forgive me, my dear sir, if opening my heart to you with frankness, and trusting to your considering my letter as written in confidence of your secrecy, I add that even at college most of those very men who ought to have used both authority and influence (and of the latter at least I was susceptible) to root out these propensities, and to implant better, rather confirmed than abated them. I must do both you and Cookson the justice to exempt you in a good degree from this charge, though, to be honest with you, not entirely. For would not the golden rule have prompted you to use towards me the language of a friend, if not of a father? (My natural father I lost when eight years old, and my grandfather and uncle soon after I went to Cambridge.) Ought you not to have urged me to look forward, and even on principles of sound human wisdom, much more on Christian principles, to consider what must be the issue of the course of life I was pursuing, and of the choice I was making of associates and friends? That though while my youthful spirits should remain I might continue an entertaining companion, yet that I should ere long bitterly lament that I had suffered the years and circumstances which supplied opportunities for acquiring useful knowledge, and even still more for cultivating and strengthening the intellectual powers, to pass away wholly unimproved? Ought you not to have reminded me of the great account I had to render of the talents committed to my stewardship, and to have enforced on me the base ingratitude, to say nothing of the guilt, of making such an unworthy return to the

Giver of all good for all the uncommon blessings which had been lavished on me with such exceeding prodigality? (I allude to my having been born in England in the eighteenth century, and not when a man of my weakly body would have been useless and contemptible if he had not been exposed in his infancy, to my having a handsome fortune, my being born in the middle rank of life, and my having, I hope, a fair proportion of natural talent, and a cheerful and not an anxious temper, one of the greatest comforts in life; but there would be no end to the enumeration. I may fill up the line with, &c. &c. &c.) You did not spend night after night at cards with me, but did you suggest to me the fate of the unprofitable servant?

All this went on, with grief and shame I say it, till by degrees I came to myself; *for to no one can the phrase be more justly applicable.* This began in the summer and autumn of 1785, and was carrying on in the winter of 1785-6, and in the following spring, when blessed, for ever blessed be God, I adopted those principles, to which, though I am but too well aware very imperfectly, I have ever since made it the great business of my life to conform my character, I should rather say my dispositions, and tempers, and conduct. Of course I then took a survey of the past and the future. Providence had placed me in a situation which I must say I still think one of the most honourable that any man can possess—that of member for Yorkshire. How was I to proceed? My religion taught me the duty of devoting all my faculties and powers as a debt of gratitude to my reconciled Father in Christ Jesus, as well as of reasonable service to my Creator, Preserver, and continual Benefactor. And I was to labour more abundantly than the men of the world, who looked only to gain or to glory for their recompense. For ‘what do ye more than others,’ was our Saviour’s language to his disciples. You know but too well how sadly empty I then was; how utterly destitute of the habits no less than of the knowledge I ought to have possessed. My business therefore manifestly was, to employ as diligently as I

could in study as much as possible of my recesses from parliament; and as I knew I could do far less in any house of my own, for many years I quartered myself for nearly all the time parliament was not sitting with different friends, who suffered me to breakfast in my own room, and live as much as I pleased the life of a student. Once I was with Cookson; (poor fellow, it is with a sigh that I write his name: he and his wife both gone and I left;) and ever after with Gisborne in Staffordshire, and Babington in Leicestershire. Thus I went on until I married in 1797.

I have gone into this narrative because you are concerned in it. You will see at once that having no house of my own, except that either in or near London, from which I attended the House of Commons, I could not ask any of my old friends to come about me under my own roof—otherwise remembering our old habits of social intercourse, I think it is most probable I should have endeavoured to renew them—yet while I am writing, a new idea has suggested itself. I do not recollect having sent you a book of a religious nature which I published in 1797, just before my marriage; if not, I gave you reason to complain of me for failing in the performance of an act of friendship; for in truth, one of the chief objects I had in view in writing and publishing that work, was to explain to my friends the causes of the change which they witnessed in my ‘goings-on,’ (to use a coarse but expressive phrase,) and the principles which I could not but earnestly wish and pray that all whom I valued and loved should also embrace. Now if I did not send it to you, I really believe the omission must have arisen from forgetfulness. But it was an unfriendly omission, and I beg your pardon for it, and will repair the fault. I grant, however, that though the interest I took in the well-being of my old friends, was even greater than it had been before the change I have been speaking of, yet that from natural and obvious causes, we were not likely to be such agreeable intimates to each other as heretofore. There was no longer the ‘*eadem velle*’ and ‘*eadem nolle*’ in the same degree,

and therefore we were likely to retain full as strong a desire to SERVE such friends as formerly, but not to have the same pleasure in each other's society. But as you and I have never to my knowledge been in the same place, we never have had opportunities of seeing much of each other. Thus, my dear sir, I have explained myself to you without reserve, and before I conclude let me say a few words concerning that same publication which I trust you will still do me the favour to accept and peruse.

It is not from any idea of its literary merit that I entreat you to peruse it. I am quite aware that it is much too diffuse and even tautologous. But I am more and more convinced by subsequent experience, that the character and practices which are recommended in it, are such as the New Testament prescribes to us, and such as alone will bring peace at the last. You will at once however see, that my main object was to endeavour to convince my friends that the mere outward profession of Christian principles could not be all that was required, when such strong figures were used and expressive explanations given to describe the dispositions and affections which were to be formed in us here, in order to qualify us for a better world hereafter.

As to the other points to which I drew your attention in my former letter, I can say but a very few words on them. It is very natural that I should not have formed a very correct idea of your political sentiments, considering our not having exchanged a word on the subject for between thirty and forty years. I am myself decidedly convinced that PARTY is one of the chief evils which in politics we have now reason to regret. This it is, which in the opinion of many well meaning (though I do not think them rightly judging) men, renders governing by influence necessary; so that it has become a settled contest, whoever is minister, between crown influence on one side and systematic opposition on the other. Of course I do not mean to condemn all co-operation of like-minded men, and I know that if I were to have made such an acknowledgment in a public as-

sembly, the ready reply would be, Why, what is that but party? It is certainly one of the innumerable cases in which the fault is in the abuse, in the excess of the thing, not in its nature.

As to Parliamentary Reform, it would require more eye-sight than I can spare to put on paper what I think on that head. But I doubt not you would concur with me in opinion that the bribery, of all sorts and forms, and the drunkenness, which attend our present system, are those evils which call by far the loudest for reform. I verily believe, and have long believed, the constituent body to be more corrupt than the representative.

My dear sir, I must say farewell. May every blessing attend you and yours."

Mr. Buxton, to whom he entrusted the lead in the House of Commons in the great question of emancipation, having written to him in terms of high eulogium on the industry which marked the employment of his time during a few days they spent together, he replied as follows:

TO T. F. BUXTON, ESQ.

"You intimated a high sense of my industry. Alas! my dear friend, truly is it said in Holy Writ, 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness.' You little know how I reproach myself for not having expended wisely and economically the many more years of health than from my bodily frame I could reasonably have expected to be employed on earth in my Master's business. I do not mean that I actually waste much time! for, honestly speaking, I am conscious that I do not; but I am sadly chargeable with the fault of not expending my time with judgment.

But alas, my dear friend, my want of industry is most exhibited, (to the Searcher of hearts, at least,) in my not duly availing myself of all opportunities of forming and strengthening the habit prescribed by the apostle, 'Whatever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the

Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father through Him.' We all are apt to forget that the great object of our lives should be to acquire that new nature which is to qualify us to live in heaven, or, in Scriptural language, is to make us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Now this new state is produced, blessed be God, in various ways, and we are never cultivating it more efficiently than when, under the influence of right motives, we are doing good to our fellow-creatures, especially if our active services are attended with self-denial. But the formation of the right temper and character is the main thing still. God can effect His own purposes by His own agents as He will. 'They also serve who only stand and wait;' and indeed they often are proceeding in the same great work of cultivating and strengthening the right dispositions and tempers—humility, submission, patience, love, peace, joy, child-like affiance, far more prosperously than those who to the view of their fellow Christians may be abounding in all the works of faith, and labours of love. Let this, my friend, be your grand work and mine, and to this end let our industry be mainly directed. One thing is needful.

Now a gracious Providence has kindly allotted to us the far easier as well as pleasanter line of active service, and let me assure you in a parenthesis, that I have often rejoiced of late years in thinking of my having you for an associate and successor, as indeed I told you. Now, my dear B., my remorse is sometimes very great, from my consciousness that we have not been duly active in endeavouring to put an end to that system of cruel bondage, which for two centuries has prevailed in our West Indian colonies; and my idea is, that a little before parliament meets, three or four of us should have a secret cabinet council, wherein we should deliberate and decide what course to pursue. I can scarcely say what pain it would give me, were I to be unable before I go hence to declare my sentiments and feelings on this head."

But no council of war was needful to decide that the first step in this attempt must be taken by himself, and that the subject must be introduced to parliament and to the nation by the long acknowledged patron of the negro race. His friends urged him therefore "to record and publish his opinions as to the state of the negro slaves, the duty of improving it, and of gradually emancipating them. Indeed my conscience reproaches me," he says, "with having too long suffered this horrible evil to go on. We must now call on all good men throughout the kingdom to join us in abolishing this wicked system, and striving to render the degraded race by degrees a free peasantry. Oh may God bless our attempt."

It was desired that he should set the renewed effort in motion, by a manifesto on the condition of the slaves in the colonies, and upon this and a preface to the work of Witherspoon, he was engaged during a great part of the winter months, bestowing much labour on the Appeal which was published early in March. He then speaks of himself as "busy for the first time on" his "Slavery Abolition work. My pamphlet is well liked, thank God." No address was ever better qualified to produce that mighty effect which followed its publication. Its kindness and forbearance towards individuals, rendered its earnest expostulations irresistible. The fervour of the writer's natural manner was so happily tempered by Christian candour, and by the wisdom of age, that no heart could be closed when he spoke, "*suavitate illâ, quâ perfunderet animos, non quâ perfringeret.*" Its perusal, a West Indian proprietor told him, "has so affected me, that should it cost me my whole property, I surrender it willingly, that my poor negroes may be brought not only to the liberty of Europeans, but especially to the liberty of Christians."

But the nation was slow to be persuaded of the cruel and debasing nature of a system which it had so long maintained, and which was linked with innumerable private interests. Mr. Wilberforce had learned too much in his thirty-five years' apprenticeship in African

controversy, to expect the chains of slavery to crumble under a single blow.

In his present measures he was but following up his former steps. He had attacked the Slave Trade as a monstrous evil in itself, while he hoped that its suppression would lead at once to an improved treatment of the race of slaves. He had waited patiently for this result; perfecting the work of Abolition by international negotiation, and guarding against smuggled importation by registering the slaves. But he waited fruitlessly; whilst the working of the registry showed beyond all doubt, that the negroes (elsewhere amongst the most prolific of the human race) were melting away under the driving system by a sure and rapid diminution. Self-interest therefore was not a sufficient corrective of the system, and delay was impossible. The time was at length come, when he must demand that from parliament, to which he had hoped that gradual improvements would have imperceptibly led on the planters.

He was also obliged at this session to defend the Society for the Suppression of Vice from the attacks of Joseph Hume.

But these peculiar services were often interrupted by his increasing infirmities. "My lungs," he says, (April 15th,) "are affected, and my voice weak; so I am forced to keep the house, though yesterday Canning's explanation about the Spanish negotiations. To-night the motion against Plunket, when, above all the House, it would have become me to move the previous question. I greatly regret that I could not go, but I must accustom myself to be willing to retire. Even a pagan could say, solve senescentem, &c. A Christian, considering himself the servant of God, does his Master's business so long as He signifies His will, by action and no less by retiring. I hope I have been acting on this principle (applying 'he must increase, but I must decrease') to other and younger men. And oh may I be enabled to walk by faith, not sight; and then all will be clear and easy, and not unpleasant." "How cheering is the con-

sideration that all events are under the guidance of infinite wisdom and goodness, and that we are hastening to a world of secure peace and joy!"

The foundation of this graceful and easy retirement from the foremost place which he had so long filled, was laid in the deep Christian humility which gave its tone to the following letter.

TO J. S. HARFORD, ESQ.

" House of Commons, April 25.

" My dear Friend,

Do not measure by the tardiness of my reply the force of the feelings excited by your last friendly note. The most interesting part I shall like to talk to you upon. O my friend, you struck a string which vibrates in my heart in full unison. When I review all my past life, and consider ever since it has been my general intention to live to the glory of God, and in obedience to His laws, what have been my obligations, and what ought to be the amount and the effects of my gratitude, what my means and opportunities of usefulness, what the scantiness of my performances, and with what alloy my motives have been debased; alas, alas, my friend, I have no peace, no rest, but in the assurances of pardon and acceptance to penitent believers in Christ Jesus; and I adopt the language of the Publican, with the declarations of mercy and grace held out to the contrite and broken-hearted. What a blessed truth it is, that it is our duty to be confident in the undeserved bounty and overflowing loving-kindness of our heavenly Father! Farewell.

Ever affectionately,
W. WILBERFORCE."

On the 15th of May, Mr. Buxton, to whom he had now committed the leading place in his great work, "began his Slavery motion about half-past five. He moved a resolution declaring Slavery repugnant to Christianity and the constitution. Canning replied, and moved reso-

lutions proclaiming reform of the system, and specifying driving, punishment of females, Sunday work, and market. It was an awkward situation, but I could not learn what our friends thought, and I never got up so utterly unprepared, but D. G. I believe I hit the point. We certainly could not have divided well. The debate dragged on till one and more."

For the remainder of the session, which he spent chiefly in town, his bodily strength was taxed to the utmost, and his breakfast table—crowded sometimes by "a consultation on our Slave cause," sometimes by most variously assorted guests, "reminded him of the old bustle of a Kensington Gore breakfast."

Even at the most busy times his sons were receiving from him the most affectionate and thoughtful letters.

TO ———.*

"London, June 14th, 1823.

"My very dear ———,

I scarcely need assure you, that however much I am occupied, I am never intentionally long without taking up my pen to write to you. There can be no business so important to me as the well-being of my children. But not seldom I am cheated out of my time; as I am at this moment. The Archbishop of Dublin was to breakfast with me, and I desired Mr. Wilson to come a little before, that I might introduce them to each other, in conformity with a principle on which I have acted for many years, and which I recommend to you early in life, that of bringing together all men who are like-minded, and may one day combine and concert for the public good.

Never omit any opportunity, my dear ———, of getting acquainted with any good or useful man. More perhaps depends on the selection of acquaintance than on any other circumstance of life. Acquaintance are the raw material, from which are manufactured friends,

* Aged 18.

husbands, wives. I wish it may please God that you may have some good ones to choose from on your first settling at Oxford. T—— seems a very pleasing young man, but I own I covet a much higher praise for my sons; and oh that I could have reason to believe they were steadily and sturdily setting themselves to act on that beautiful description of the true Christian's character which we had two or three mornings ago in our family service, 'among whom ye shine as lights in the world!' O my dearest ——, what would I give to see you a *φωσκηρ εν τῷ κοσμῳ*. The idea has brought tears into my eyes and almost disqualified me from going on with my letter. My dearest ——, aim high; do not be contented with being hopeful; strive to be a Christian in the highest sense of that term. How little do you know to what services Providence may call you! If, when I was at your age, any one had pointed to me and said, That youth in a few years will be member for the first county in England, it would have been deemed the speech of a madman. But I can truly say I would as much rather see you a Buchanan, as eternity is beyond any given portion of time in the estimate of a reasonable being.

But my time and eyesight are expended, and though I seem as full of matter as ever, I must stop—not, however, without assuring you how earnestly I shall pray for you to-morrow, (inter Sylvas Mardeni,) that you 'may be strengthened with might in the inner man.'

The young men of our day are in no danger of being called to the encounter of fire and sword—to burning at the stake; but then the consequence of this absolution, is their not being prepared for that milder form of persecution which they may be called on to face. But all may be done through prayer—almighty prayer, I am ready to say; and why not? For that it is almighty, is only through the gracious ordination of the God of love and truth. Oh then pray, pray, pray, my dearest ——; but then remember to estimate your state on self-examination not by your prayers, but by what you find to be the effects of them on your character, tempers, and life.

But this opens a wide prospect, and I must stop. Most reluctantly, farewell.

Ever most affectionately yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

The conclusion of this letter is a picture of the tone of his religion; fruitful in the liveliest affections, but tested unceasingly by its more substantial fruits. "I should wish to know," he said after hearing of a happy death, "the man's previous character; for such expressions of confidence in the Saviour are not satisfactory to me unless they are accompanied by other marks of practical religion."

CHAPTER XII.

Barmouth—Retires from Parliament—Visits to Friends—Recollections of Public Characters.

HAVING given up his tenancy of Marden Park, Mr. Wilberforce was now looking out for some summer quarters, at which to fix his family. No Diary of the next few months was found amongst his papers; but his correspondence will supply the blank, and enable us to trace his steps. Shortly before leaving London he thus mentions to a son (æt. 18,) the place upon which he had decided for the gathering of the family.

"Brompton, July 29, 1823.

"My very dear —,

Your disappointment at the arrangement which prevented your paying us a pop-visit can scarcely have been greater than ours; but it is a great pleasure to me to think that we shall meet D. V. ere long, and spend some time together. It will then be your duty to take plenty

of air and exercise; and in selecting Barmouth for our quarters I was principally decided by the consideration that the place would tend to render the duty a greater pleasure to you all. Barmouth, I understand, is very near the most ferocious and untamed of all the Welsh mountain-lions, though Snowdon may take the lead a little in mere bulk.

In came —— about an hour ago. She speaks of your and ——'s kindness to her in terms which delight my heart. Even the world, not commonly a just estimator of the value of character and conduct, always respects and admires family union and affection. May a gracious God keep you all, my dear children, mutually attached to each other: the ties of nature being strengthened, and adorned, and perpetuated by the influence of grace. Farewell, my beloved ——. Praying God to bless you, I am

Ever affectionately yours,
W. WILBERFORCE."

On his road to Barmouth he wrote to one who had shared his excursion to the Lakes, and who had been the most intimate friend of his eldest daughter.

"July 30.

"My dear ——,

Any one whom I love at all, I seem to love better in a land of mountains; and I understand that of all the Welsh lions, Cader Idris, beside the roots of which Barmouth is situated, if not the most respectable in size, is the wildest and most untameable in his properties. Yet certain recollections will chasten the vivid colouring of this glowing prospect, and though with a melancholy now become not unpleasing, because so enriched and animated by hope, will a little sadden the gaiety of the scene. Fancy would paint for itself a renewal of the expedition in which I rode by your side in scaling the heights of Skiddaw, or in which Southey skipped as light and elastic as a bird from stone to stone in tracking his path through Brothersdale, near Wyburn Water.

There was a chapel and a school—not that school tyrannized over by that Queen Elizabeth of schoolmistresses at whose nod the terrified children trembled in Langdale. How naturally we are drawn into retracing our steps when we look back with interest on the road we travelled!

I have lately been hearing the first hundred pages of Southey's *Peninsular War*, in which he gives you a bird's eye view of the French principles, and character, and conduct under Buonaparte; and they have rekindled in me that warmth of gratitude, which I own I think is far too little felt by my countrymen, even by the considerate and serious of them, towards the great Disposer of all things for having delivered us from the imminent danger to which we were exposed, if not of becoming the prey of that ferocious and unprincipled tyrant, yet of having our country the seat of warfare, with all the unspeakable and almost innumerable evils and miseries which we must in that case have endured, though we had been ultimately victorious. One of Buonaparte's generals, in the true spirit of his school, (Augereau, I think,) is said to have declared in speaking of this very subject, 'Let me land with 100,000 men in England, and I do not say I will keep possession of the country for France, but this I say, that the country shall be brought into such a state, that no Englishman shall be able to live in it with comfort for a hundred years to come.'

What a fiend-like spirit! to contemplate with savage joy the pains of his inflicting, which should be felt by generations yet unborn. The mind that could cherish such a sentiment must indeed be enmity itself against God, whose nature and whose name is love. O, my dear friend, what emotions are called forth by the very mention of that infinitely glorious and gracious Being, the sum of all perfection, who condescends to grant us even here a measure of His Spirit and nature, and of whom we are told that when He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Oh may we verify our title to that blessed distinction, by our practical observation of the apostle's declaration, that every one that

hath this hope purifieth himself even as He is pure. May we be enabled to prosecute our endeavours after this blessed state with more unceasing and strenuous vigour, and may we have reason hereafter to look back with mutual thankfulness towards each other on account of our having been mutually useful to each other in this greatest of all lines of service. Believe me to be

Ever very affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

From this retirement he watched with intense interest the progress of his cause. "I am expecting tidings of the reception given in the West Indies to the account of the parliamentary proceedings, and more especially of Mr. Canning's proposals." "My heart and head are full of West Indian matters." "I wish that I could be as easy about insurrection as you and Stephen. That they would not happen if the people on the spot really apprehended them, and would take reasonable means of guarding against them, I verily believe, but *rebus sic stantibus*, I have ever been, I own, and still am, afraid on that head. Yet what can we do but act as cautiously as justice and humanity will allow?"

After his return from Barmouth, during his attendance on parliament, he was in the utmost danger from an attack of inflammation of the lungs. His perfect patience, and the bursts of love and thankfulness which were ever breaking forth throughout this season of restlessness and languor, can never be forgotten by those who watched with the deepest anxiety beside the sick-bed of such a father. He was continually repeating what shortly before he had observed to Mr. Stephen; "No man has been more favoured than I, for even when I am ill my complaints occasion little suffering." Beckoning to him one of his sons when he was scarce able to speak, he whispered, "At this moment I have your face before me when I left you at school in Leicestershire."

To Mr. Babington, who had expressed his pleasure at witnessing the great affection borne him by his family, he wrote in reply—"No physician can devise,

and no money can purchase, such a cordial restorative to a sick man. And then how exceedingly favourable are these domestic blessings to a state of heart pleasing to God !” “How much have I seen some characters improved, even independently of all religious principles, by the softening and stimulating power which He has graciously imparted to these strong affections.”

It would indeed be strange if it had been otherwise. He was beloved in general society ; but if he sparkled there, he shone at home. None but his own family could fully know the warmth of his heart, or the unequalled sweetness of his temper. With the strictest truth they can affirm, that never in the most unguarded moments of domestic privacy did they see obscured, in word or action, the full sunshine of his kindest affections.

“ His every deed and word that he did say
Was like enchantment, which through both the eyes,
And both the ears, did steal the heart away.”

The last entry of his Diary before he was confined wholly to his bed, was, “Poor Smith the missionary died in prison at Demerara ! The day of reckoning will come ;”—and the first public business he attempted, after leaving his sick room, was, (June 1st,) “Preparing for Smith the missionary’s business. I was at the House the first time for eight weeks or more. Brougham made a capital speech, by Mackintosh well termed impregnable. I doubt not he will be great in reply. Mackintosh’s own was most beautiful, his mind teemed with ideas.” The decision was postponed till the 11th, on which occasion he spoke at large.

“The West Indians,” he said, “abhor alike the end we have in view, and the means by which we hope to reach it. They frankly avow that from the emancipation of their slaves they look for inevitable ruin ; whilst all their prejudices are revolted by each of our remedial measures. If they agreed with us as to our grand object, we might hope to lessen by degrees their aversion to our several steps ; or were those measures singly acceptable to them,

we might hope gradually and almost insensibly to lead them to our end. But what can we hope, when they abhor alike both means and end? It is with reluctance and pain I come forward, but I esteem it my bounden duty to protest against the policy on which we are now acting. ‘*Liberavi animam meam.*’ May it please God to disappoint my expectations, and to render the result more favourable than I anticipate.”

These prophetic words were the last which he uttered in the House of Commons. Ten days later he set off, after attending a meeting held in honour of James Watt, for Lord Gambier’s seat at Iver; and on the road was seized with a new attack of illness. When he reached Lord Gambier’s he was “but just able to be helped up stairs to bed,” where he lay in an alarming state for almost a month. This second attack left him in so shattered a condition, as to enforce upon him the necessity of absolute repose, and as soon as he could move with safety he took possession of a small house bordering on Uxbridge Common.

Here he lived in entire seclusion, though by no means in idleness. “We have been living very quietly; never visiting, scarcely receiving a single visiter. Often we have a little family reading in the evenings after tea, (Robertson’s *America*,) which I should always like, if it did not compel me to write my letters in the morning, when I wish to be employed in more solid work. Oh that God would enable me to execute my long-formed purpose of writing another religious book. I have also a wish to write something political: my own life, and Pitt’s too, coming into the discussion.”

As the year advanced he moved in pursuance of Medical advice to Bath, and though much annoyed by the many inroads upon his time incident to the habits of the place, he was yet gratified by the renewal of old friendships, and closed his sojourn there by visits to Blaize Castle and Barley Wood; and he enters in his Diary, Nov. 3d: “Sat with Hannah More about an hour and a half—she as animated as I ever knew her, quoting authors, &c. Off about one, after praying with her.” He

“ returned to our cottage retirement near Uxbridge to collect his children around him according to the good old English custom. I lay no little stress on the bringing together at Christmas all the members of the family, if it can be effected. Such an anniversary annually observed, tends to heal any little division, and to cherish mutual attachments.” The new year opened according to his wish. “ Our dear boys living in much harmony. What cause have I for gratitude, seeing my five children, my son’s wife and two grand children, all round my table ! Praise the Lord, Oh my soul.”

One important question occupied his thoughts all through the autumn. His strength had been visibly impaired by the severe attacks of the spring and summer ; and he was strongly recommended to retire from public life. He could not bring himself at once to acquiesce in this decision. “ The idea of retiring and not endeavouring to bear” his “ testimony once more in support of truth and righteousness,” he found “ very painful.” This was not from any restless wish to be in action. “ There was no particular,” he had three years before this time declared to Dr Chalmers, “ in which his estimate of things had been more corrected than in his judgment of the comparative usefulness of different individuals. To express my sentiments briefly I may say, that I more and more enter into the spirit of that beautiful sonnet of Milton’s on his blindness, ending

‘ Who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best—
They also serve who only stand and wait.’ ”

This quietness of mind was increased by his habitual reference of all that concerned himself to the leading of God’s providence. In the course of this autumn, an arrangement was suggested to him by the friendly zeal of Sir John Sinclair, which would have removed him to the calmer atmosphere of the Upper House. “ To your friendly suggestion,” was his remarkable reply, “ respecting changing the field of my parliamentary labours,

I must say a word or two, premising that I do not intend to continue in public life longer than the present parliament. I will not deny that there have been periods, in my life, when on worldly principles the attainment of a permanent, easy, and quiet seat in the legislature, would have been a pretty strong temptation to me. But, I thank God, I was strengthened against yielding to it. For (understand me rightly) as I had done nothing to make it naturally come to me, I must have endeavoured to go to it; and this would have been carving for myself, if I may use the expression, much more than a Christian ought to do."

His reluctance to retire sprung from deep humility. It was not so much that he wished to do more, as that he regretted he had done so little.

To Mr. Harford he writes: "When I consider that my public life is nearly expired, and when I review the many years I have been in it, I am filled with the deepest compunction, from the consciousness of my having made so poor a use of the talents committed to my stewardship. The heart knows its own bitterness. We alone know ourselves, the opportunities we have enjoyed, and the comparative use we have made of them. But it is only to your friendly ear that I breathe out my secret sorrows. I might be supposed by others to be fishing for a compliment. Well, it is an unspeakable consolation that we serve a gracious Master, who giveth liberally and upbraideth not." This was no passing feeling. A year after he wrote to Mr. Gurney.

TO J. J. GURNEY.

"Oct. 24, 1825.

"My dear Friend,

My eyes are indifferent, and were they ever so strong I should wear them out, were I to attempt to give expression to the sentiments and feelings with which my bosom is overcharged. Let us rejoice and bless God that we live in a land in which we are able to exert our faculties in mitigating the sufferings, redressing the

wrongs, and above all, promoting the best interests of our fellow-creatures. I sometimes fear we are not sufficiently thankful for this most gratifying and honourable distinction; and perhaps I feel this the more strongly, because in the private ear of a Christian friend I will whisper, that though I should not speak truly if I were to charge my parliamentary life with sins of commission, (for I can call God to witness, so far as I can recollect, that I always spoke and voted according to the dictates of my conscience, for the public and not for my own private interest,) yet I am but too conscious of numerous and great sins of omission, many opportunities of doing good either not at all or very inadequately improved. Particularly, from an early period of my parliamentary life, I intended to propose a bill for greatly lessening the number of oaths, and once I carried on a previous inquiry, and had a committee formed for the purpose. But, alas! alas! I have been forced to retire from public life re infectâ, though I must say that several times I had reason to believe that some other members, chiefly official men, would take the measure off my hands, and I always preferred employing others on such occasions, that I might not be said to be trying to monopolize. But my friends deceived me. Believe me to be ever, my dear friend,

Yours very affectionately,

W. WILBERFORCE."

Thoroughly had he imbibed the spirit of the precept, which bids us "when we have done all, say we are unprofitable servants," who after forty years of such service could see only his omissions. More indeed he might have effected if his habits had been strictly regular and business-like; but it would have been at a great sacrifice of incidental good. His daily trayfull of letters, which in 1806 so alarmed his colleague Mr. Fawkes, that he exclaimed on seeing it, "If this is to be member for Yorkshire the sooner I am rid of it the better," consumed many of his best hours; but they were given up to "Christian courtesy," and "the relief of individual

distress." He might have closed his doors against the tide of interruptions which flowed in upon him day by day; but if he had, many a friendless sufferer would have "cried unto the Lord against him." He gave way therefore to these interruptions upon principle. "It appears to me," he said in the review of his political life, "that public men in this country should consider it one of the duties imposed on them by Providence, to receive and inquire into the case of distressed persons, who from finding them interested for suffering individuals, or classes of mankind, are naturally led to apply to them for the redress of their own grievances, or the supply of their own wants."

On this principle he strictly acted, and by a multitude of daily charities, as much as by his public conduct, "urged on the lingering progress of the human mind."

"I was with him once," says Lord Clarendon, "when he was preparing to make an important motion in the House of Commons. While he was most deeply engaged, a poor man called, I think his name was Simkins, who was in danger of being imprisoned for a small debt. He could find no one to be bound for him. Wilberforce did not like to become his surety without inquiry; it was contrary to a rule which he had made; but nothing could induce him to send the man away. 'His goods,' said he, 'will be sold, and the poor fellow will be totally ruined.' I believe, at last, he paid the debt himself; but I remember well the interruption which it gave to his business, which he would not resume till the case was provided for."

This was a sample of his life; and if he now looked back on many plans of usefulness which he had left unaccomplished, it was not because his time had been passed in ease or self-indulgence, but because he had never learned to "stop his ears at the cry of the poor."

To a son at college, he announced in the following letter his determination.

“Near Uxbridge, Feb. 1.

“My dear ——,

I should not like you to hear from common rumour that I have decided to retire from public life, and therefore, though much pressed for time, I announce to you this to me important, and what from the affectionate concern my very dear —— takes in all that belongs to me, will be to him very interesting intelligence. It is to me almost like change of nature to quit parliamentary life, all the particulars of which have been formed into habits during a course of almost forty-six years. But after mature reflection, the good I was likely to do in the House of Commons appeared to be outweighed by the probable danger to my life, and the consequent loss of any good I might yet do in a private station, either to my own family, or to a still wider circle. And it should be borne in mind, that in this comparison, all that may be done in private life was to be balanced, not against the effect of the labours of even a single session, but that of the occasional attendance to which alone my medical adviser would accede.

What cause have I for thankfulness, that in withdrawing from the political circle, I retire into the bosom of a family whose affectionate assiduities would be sufficient to cheer the lowest state of poverty and depression, while I have all around me that can administer to my comfort, or rather enjoyment, in the evening of life! Praise the Lord, O my soul. Indeed I hope I am in some degree, though not sufficiently, grateful for all these blessings. No one perhaps has such cause as myself to adopt the psalmist's declaration, ‘Surely goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life.’ Good-night my dear ——. Our friends the Babingtons are staying with us, which leaves me less time for writing even than I have eyesight. I know I shall be much pressed to-morrow, so I have taken up a very bad pen to-night. May God bless you—the constant wish, as in a few minutes it will be the prayer, of

Your most affectionate father,

W. WILBERFORCE.”

His place as a mere orator was still amongst the very first. When he spoke indeed on the common subjects of political dispute the effects of age were in a degree visible; but, to the very last, when he lighted on a thoroughly congenial subject, he broke out into those strains which made Sir Samuel Romilly esteem him "the most efficient speaker in the House of Commons," and which had long before led Pitt himself to say repeatedly, "Of all the men I ever knew, Wilberforce has the greatest natural eloquence." Mr. Morritt seems to have formed a very accurate conception both of his ordinary powers of speaking, and of that measure of decay which they at last exhibited. "I find," he says, "that I have recorded my own general opinion of his oratory and parliamentary exertions, in terms which, though intended only to commemorate for my own future reflection the more recent impression they made, I extract from their privacy in my drawer, that you may be more sure of their being my genuine and impartial judgment.

"Wilberforce held a high and conspicuous place in oratory, even at a time when English eloquence rivalled whatever we read of in Athens or in Rome. His voice itself was beautiful; deep, clear, articulate, and flexible. I think his greatest premeditated efforts were made for the Abolition of the Trade in Slaves, and in supporting some of the measures brought forward by Pitt, for the more effectual suppression of revolutionary machinations, but he often rose unprepared in mixed debate, on the impulse of the moment, and seldom sat down without having struck into that higher tone of general reasoning and vivid illustration, which left on his hearers the impression of power beyond what the occasion had called forth. He was of course unequal, and I have often heard him confess that he never rose without embarrassment, and always felt for a while that he was languid and speaking feebly, though he warmed as he went on. I have heard the late Mr. Windham express the same discontent with himself, both probably from the high standard of excellence at which they aimed. I always felt, and have often heard it remarked by others, that in

all his speeches, long or short, there was generally at least from five to ten minutes of brilliance, which even the best orator in the House might have envied.

"His own unaffected principles of humility, and his equally sincere estimate of the judgment and good intentions of others, which became in advancing life more and more predominant, influenced both his line of oratory, and his reasoning when not in the House of Commons. He gradually left off the keener weapons of ridicule and sarcasm, however well applied and justly aimed; but with the candour that gave what he thought due weight to an adversary's argument, he sometimes (as it seemed to me) with undue diffidence neglected or hesitated to enforce his own. Sometimes also, as on the questions involving peace or war, the wishes of his heart were at variance with the conclusions of his understanding, and 'resolutions of great pith and moment,'

'Were sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought.'

"I have more than once remonstrated with him for giving us in his speech the deliberation which passed in his own mind, instead of the result to which it led him, thus furnishing his opponents with better weapons than their own arsenal could supply. Of course this led to many an imputation of inconsistency from those who loved him not, which those who knew him not received; but the real difference was between the manly decision of his conduct, and his unfeigned distrust and diffidence of his own opinions."

But if his powers of oratory had been in some measure impaired by age, the authority of character had only ripened with his years. He had been a long standing proof of the fallacy of the assertion, that without connexion with a party, no man can attain political importance; and the "moral compulsion" which he exercised continually strengthened. Here he was sure of his conclusions, and neither in word or deed was there any doubt or indecision. "It is the fashion to speak of Wilberforce," said one of the heads of the Colonial Office,

whom in his later years he had been compelled to weary with his demands of justice for his clients, "as a gentle, yielding character, but I can only say that he is the most obstinate, impracticable fellow with whom I ever had to do." A friend met him once returning from an audience with one of the ministers, with whom he had remonstrated on an improper appointment—the nomination of a man of notoriously immoral character to a responsible office abroad. "I conceived," he said, "that the honour of the country was involved, and therefore I plainly told him my mind, and that he would have to answer hereafter for his choice, but he was so angry that I thought he would have knocked me down."

Such a man could not bid farewell to public life without much observation from his fellows, and without being followed into his retirement by the sincere regret of multitudes.

To two of his sons who had requested him to send them his last frank, he wrote on the day of his retirement.

TO ROBERT ISAAC WILBERFORCE, ESQ. AND SAMUEL WILBERFORCE, ESQ. ORIEL COLLEGE, OXFORD.

"My dear boys,

When Charles the First was on the very point of exchanging, as I trust, a temporal for an eternal crown, he was forced to be short, so he said but one word—and now I have but a moment in which to use my pen, and therefore, my dear boys, I also will adopt his language, and add as he did, REMEMBER.—You can fill up the chasm. I will only add, that with constant wishes and prayers for your usefulness, comfort, and honour here, and for glory, honour, and immortality for you hereafter, I remain,

Ever your most affectionate father,

W. WILBERFORCE."

One more extract in a higher tone will complete the exhibition of his feelings. After speaking in glowing language of the "full harvest" younger men might live to

see, from "the good seed now sowing in this highly-favoured land and its dependencies, let me check," he continues, "this random sally of the imagination; and for you, though much younger than me, as well as for myself, let me recollect that we may humbly hope, through the infinite mercies of our God and Saviour, to behold all the joys and glories that I have been anticipating for the generations to come, but to behold them from a higher elevation, and through a purer medium. We are not told that Moses was to experience after death any thing different from mankind in general; and we know that he took part in the events of this lower world, and on the mount of transfiguration talked with Christ concerning his death which he was to undergo at Jerusalem. And I love, my dear friend, to dwell on this idea, that after our departure from the scene of our earthly pilgrimage, we shall witness the developement of the plans we may have formed for the benefit of our fellow-creatures; the growth and fruitage of the good principles we have implanted and cultivated in our children; and above all, the fulfilment of the prayers we have poured forth for them, in the large effusions on them of that heavenly grace, which above all things we have implored as their portion. It is almost, I fear, to touch too tender a string, but there is one within my breast also, which vibrates in exact unison with yours; and may I add, that I cannot doubt our own dear children are now taking a tender interest in all that concerns the real happiness of those parents, the value of whose Christian instruction, and prayers, and tears, they are in a situation to estimate more justly, and therefore to feel for them a more lively gratitude, than while they were our fellow-travellers through this transitory world. I must no longer trespass on my slender stock of eyesight, but say, farewell."

When Mr. Wilberforce quitted parliament he determined to withdraw from London altogether. His temporary retirement near Uxbridge was exchanged, therefore, for a freehold residence at Highwood Hill, a pleasant spot, just "beyond the disk of the metropolis."

"We have bought a house about ten miles north of London," he tells Mr. Gisborne. "I shall be a little Zemindar there; 140 acres of land, cottages, of my own, &c."

His feelings when purchasing this place are expressed in his comments on the habits of a friend. "How rational is his mode of life! Domestic charities sweetening and cheering the defilements of worldly affairs. I partake in his longing for repose; and oh may I be enabled more and more to walk during the years which may yet remain for me in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost." "Oh may I only walk with God during my closing years, and then where is of little consequence."

His new purchase was not yet ready for the reception of his family, and he spent the spring of 1825 in the quiet of his Uxbridge cottage, and rejoiced to find more time than heretofore for miscellaneous reading.

Many of his friends were now again his guests, and the notice of these visits in which he delighted, occupies a large share of his Diary. "March 24th. Inglis and two Thorntons came in the evening—stayed all next day. Inglis extremely entertaining, and most kind. Not out of my dressing-room when they went, but Inglis chatted with me, and the girls shook hands. Sir Stamford and Lady Raffles, and Dr. Morrison the Chinese scholar, came between one and two—Lord Gambier called, and we had an entertaining confabulation. Ward dined, and we had a very interesting evening. Good Morrison strongly censuring the lukewarmness of Christians, which prevents their devoting themselves to God's service, as missionaries for China. His plan that persons should become ministers of Chinese, and then settle on the borders. The Chinese a reading people; and he thinks by degrees you would introduce your knowledge and religion. Dear ——— seems touched; may God direct him. Singular criminal law of the Battas, by which persons committing great crimes are sentenced to be eat up alive; the injured party having the first choice—the

ear claimed and eat, &c., until the mass fall on. The coup de grace, except in strong cases, given early. When Sir Stamford contended against the practice, the people urged, 'what defence can we have for our morals?' April 18th. I fear that I am wasting my precious time, and the night is coming fast with me. Oh may I strive to be ever abounding in the work of the Lord. May He enable me to commence some useful work. 30th. When breakfast was just over my attached old friend Creyke came over in a chaise and announced his staying till four. To so kind a friend I owe much more than the sacrifice of a single day. Made the time less a blank by getting him to read with me W. Whitmore's speech on the Corn Laws. Evening Mr. and Mrs. North, and Leslie Forster, and Buxton, and Calthorpe arrived. Much talk. May 20th. Butterworth dropped in with Professor Tholuck from Berlin."

A part of the summer he spent in visits to his old friends, with many of whom he had much delightful intercourse, and early in November, found himself once more at Bath, where he complains as usual of interruption, though even here he kept the same vigilant watch upon himself as he maintained in his more private hours.

"Hearing Macaulay's Abstract of the Papers laid before Parliament about the Slaves; a most useful work. How he shames me! Yet my eyes could not perform it, or any thing that requires eyesight. Too much time taken, and interest too, in Walter Scott's Heart of Mid Lothian. Yet I only hear it in afternoon and evening. Much the best of his novels that I have heard. Jeanie Deans a truly Christian character, and beautiful, as far as it goes. Yet I have been tempted to bestow some eyesight and time upon it, which should have been better employed." Never scarcely did he lay down these fascinating volumes without repeating his complaint "that they should have so little moral or religious object. They remind me of a giant spending his strength in cracking nuts. I would rather go to render up my account at the last day, carrying up with me 'The Shep-

herd of Salisbury Plain,' than bearing the load of all those volumes, full as they are of genius.

With these are mingled other entries full of pregnant intimations of his state of mind. "Butterworth breakfasted; full of matter and good works—all activity; God bless him! Dear Simons in full feather, but too wild, and in prayer too familiar. Saw a delightful letter from Bishop Heber—200 native converts, and he never saw meeker Christians, or of more intense and touching piety." An ardent love for the Liturgy grew manifestly with his years. He breaks out this winter in a letter to a friend, into a warm expression of his "delight in the principles of our various formularies. Though they are sometimes unconsciously possessed and used, and their nature and qualities often misconceived, and at times calumniated; yet in circumstances of depression and desolation their sanative excellence displays itself like some rich unguent that had been frozen and torpid; they begin to emit their healing fragrance, and to supply an antidote to the poison, that would otherwise consume the vitals."

Leaving Bath in December he spent a few days with Mr. Harford at Blaize Castle; and here "he slid," says his host, "insensibly into continuous descriptions of parliamentary scenes with which he had been connected.

'When Lord Londonderry was in his ordinary mood, he was very tiresome, so slow and heavy, his sentences only half formed, his matter so confused, like what is said of the French army in the Moscow retreat when horse, foot, and carriages of all sorts were huddled together, helter-skelter; yet when he was thoroughly warmed and excited, he was often very fine, very statesman-like, and seemed to rise quite into another man.'

'Our general impression of Sheridan was, that he came to the House with his flashes prepared and ready to be let off. He avoided encountering Pitt in unforeseen debating, but when forced to it usually came off well.'

'Fox was often truly wonderful. He would begin at full tear, and roll on for hours together without tiring either himself or us.'

‘Pitt talked a great deal among his friends. Fox in general society was quiet and unassuming. Sheridan was a jolly companion, and told good stories, but has been overrated as a wit by Moore.’

‘Fox was truly amiable in private life, and great allowances ought to be made for him: his father was a profligate politician, and allowed him as much money to gamble with as ever he wished.’

‘I asked him if he remembered the miser Elwes in the House of Commons? ‘Perfectly; and that question reminds me of a curious incident which one day befell that strange being. In my younger days we often went to the House in full dress, on nights, for example, when we were any of us going to the opera. Bankses, on an occasion of this kind, was seated next Elwes, who was leaning his head forward just at the moment when Bankses rose hastily to leave his seat, and the hilt of his sword happening to come in contact with the miser’s wig, which he had probably picked off some scare-crow, it was unconsciously borne away by Bankses, who walked in his stately way down the House, followed by Elwes full of anxiety to regain his treasure. The House was in a roar of merriment, and for a moment Bankses looked about him wondering exceedingly what had happened. The explanation was truly amusing, when he became conscious of the sword-hilt which he had acquired.’

‘As we were one day talking of devotional poetry, ‘Dr. Johnson,’ said he, ‘has passed a very sweeping condemnation on it, and has given his opinion, that success in this species of composition is next to impossible. And the reason which he gives for it is, that all poetry implies exaggeration, but the objects of religion are so great in themselves, as to be incapable of augmentation. One would think however that religion ought to be the very region of poetry. It relates to subjects which, above all others, agitate the hopes and fears of mankind; it embodies every thing that can melt by its tenderness, or elevate by its sublimity; and it has a natural tendency to call forth in the highest degree, feelings of gratitude and thankfulness for inestimable mercies. His prejudice,

poor man, appears to me to resolve itself into the same cause, which prevented his deriving comfort from the cultivation of religion. The view which he took of Christianity acted on his fears, it inspired him with terror, it led him to superstition, but it did not animate his affections, and therefore it neither duly influenced his conduct, nor imparted comfort to his feelings.'

"We were talking of the levity and gaiety of heart of the French, even under the severest misfortunes. This drew forth an anecdote, which had been related to him by Mr. Pitt. 'Shortly after the tragical death of Marie Antoinette, M. Perigord, an emigrant of some consequence, who had made Mr. Pitt's acquaintance at Versailles, took refuge in England, and on coming to London went to pay his respects in Downing Street. The conversation naturally turned upon the bloody scenes of the French Revolution; on their fatal consequences to social order; and in particular on the barbarity with which the unfortunate Queen had been treated. The Frenchman's feelings were quite overcome, and he exclaimed amidst violent sobbing, "Ah Monsieur Pitt, la pauvre Reine! la pauvre Reine!" These words had scarcely been uttered, when he jumped up as if a new idea suddenly possessed him, and looking towards a little dog which came with him, he exclaimed, "Cependant, Monsieur Pitt, il faut vous faire voir mon petit chien danser." Then pulling a small kit out of his pocket, he began dancing about the room to the sound of his little instrument, and calling to the dog, "Fanchon, Fanchon, dansez, dansez," the little animal instantly obeyed, and they cut such capers together that the minister's gravity was quite overcome, and he burst into a loud laugh, hardly knowing whether he was most amused or astonished.'"

The "love of ease" never tainted his old age. He had entered upon private life with the remark, "A man need not be idle because he ceases to be loquacious." Yet now that he had retired from parliament he declined invitations to participate in public meetings, and the presentation of addresses even on the subject which ha

so long engrossed, his mind and affections and he declared himself unwilling to "take the lead when I can no longer direct the measures." "It seems like wishing to retain the reins when I can no longer hold them." Yet rather than throw any damp upon the cause, he yielded to the earnest solicitations of his friends, and took the chair at the meeting of the Anti-Slavery Society in this year.

"Alas!" he complains at the beginning of the new year, "life is stealing away. It ought to shock me to think how all are at work endeavouring to promote the poor slaves' well-being. But all my friends advised retiring. Well, let me at least try to act in the spirit of that verse of this evening's family reading, 'Be ye always abounding in the work of the Lord.'" He now occupied until the spring a house at Beckenham, which had been lent him by a friend, where he enjoyed much of that retirement which he so long had coveted. "Few callers here. I have my time more to myself than I can expect almost anywhere." "May I especially strive against that fatal trifling away part of the closing hour at night. Let me employ an hour in spiritual exercises, prayer, meditation, Scripture reading, and other serious books, as Lives, &c." Here his rarer intercourse with society was under the same rules as when he moved in the full stream of London life. "Mr. and Mrs. W. came in the evening. How little did I improve the opportunity, though indeed I know not what could be done, but to show civility, and that I had no horns or tail!" Through the Christmas holidays his family all gathered round him; and with them and visits from his friends in London, his time was fully occupied. His thoughts too turned watchfully to the progress of the cause with which his life had been identified; and he was often busy with his pen in guiding the decisions of its chief conductors. "Macauley giving me useful intelligence. We differing about Female Anti-Slavery Associations. Babington with me, grounding it on St. Paul. I own I cannot relish the plan. All private exertions for such an object become their character, but for ladies to meet, to publish,

to go from house to house stirring up petitions—these appear to me proceedings unsuited to the female character as delineated in Scripture. And though we should limit the interference of our ladies to the cause of justice and humanity, I fear its tendency would be to mix them in all the multiform warfare of political life.”

CHAPTER XIII.

Extracts from Diary—Life at Highwood Hill—Tranquillity of his age—
Various sketches of Character.

A FEW extracts from his Diary will exhibit in a familiar view the tone of his mind and feeling at this period of his career.

“April 10th. The Bishop of —— called on me, and I walked with him till almost four, when I had barely time to write a letter to C. Grant about teaching the evidence of the Christian religion to the young men educating for writers. Greatly pleased with ——; he in a very emphatic manner begged my prayers, and said he should reckon much on them:” they were promised; “and never since,” he said shortly before his death, “to the best of my belief, omitted for a single day.”

“12th. Hearing the Workhouse Boy’s Letters, given to me by Mrs. Samuel Hoare. Oh how humiliating they are when I reflect on the few advantages he enjoyed, and the improvement made of them! But what a blessed proof of the grace of God! What religion but Christianity can produce such blessed effects—such extinction of self—such a desire to please God—to perform the relative duties to his unkind father—such elevation of soul with so little knowledge!

“22d. Bath. Hearing Old Mortality after dinner: the story of the Covenanters. It has made me sit up too late, and interested me too deeply; Oimoi! Scott is

certainly a distinct exhibiter of human characters and affections. But I hope his delineation of the Cameronians is too dark, and more especially his making them scruple at no means when the end is good, (as wronging Edith Bellenden of her right to buy the old hypocritical scoundrel, Basil Oliphant).

“5th. With —— to Quakers’ meeting. We first sat still (they all with their hats on) for about twenty minutes, then —— slowly rose and prayed for about five minutes an opening prayer. Then he preached as we should say for about an hour, (no text, and for want perhaps of divisions it appeared rambling, and left no deposit, only impression) then after a short pause, notice was given that service at six, and neighbours shook hands with each other. We all came away thankful that not Quakers. No Scripture reading, no Common Prayer. The *Prayer* himself kneels, the rest stand. Afternoon to —— Chapel: an excellent sound sermon.

“12th. Heard from dear Lord ——, of his son’s death, but in such a state of mind as to cause joy as well as peace.

“15th. Finished Peveril—the humours of the unprincipled Buckingham—the acuteness of Charles—his easiness of temper: unprincipled, wild, and varying as the winds, admirably delineated. The Cavalier character in broad and strong colours, well done but no nicety. I am glad we have finished the work; this class of writing is too interesting; it makes other studies insipid, or rather other light reading: but yet much to be learned from this class of writings, which I shall state in a separate piece.”

On the 15th of June he took possession of his house at Highwood Hill, with the characteristic entry—“Late when got home, and had a too hasty prayer for first settlement in a new house—all in confusion.” He was now here only for a week, and then went on into Suffolk.

“26th. Dined at Samuel Hoare’s at Hampstead, with Dr. and Mrs. Lushington, and William Allen, who still goes on doing good. Miss Joanna Baillie came in the evening—so like the Doctor, as quite to affect me. Dr.

Lushington acting a most important part in changing the condition of the coloured class through the whole West Indies, by contending against the oppression exercised towards Lecesne and D'Escoffery. Oh what a glorious thing it is for a man to be a member of a free country! He and Miss Baillie were asked if they believed in a particular Providence. 'Yes,' they replied, 'on great occasions.' As unphilosophical as unscriptural—must not the smallest links be as necessary for maintaining the continuity, as the greatest? Great and little belong to our littleness, but there is no great and little to God."

The chief feature of 1827, was a progress which he made after an interval of almost twenty years through his native county. He had a strong wish, as he told one of his cotemporaries, "to revisit the scenes of his childhood, and early youth." From Yoxall Lodge, where he halted for a time, he wrote to Mr. Stephen. "Well as I thought I knew this place, and much as I admired it, I never saw its riches displayed in such overflowing profusion. I never was here before till late in the year, or saw the first foliage of the magnificent oak contrast with the dark holly, the flowering furze, and the horse chestnut." "A fine tree always seems to me like a community in itself, with the countless insects which it shelters and nourishes in its roots and branches; it is quite a merciful ordination of Providence, that the forests of our country (to which as a maritime nation we look for protection and commerce) should be so admirable for their beauty. Instead of a beautiful ornament, they might have been a disagreeable object to which we were compelled to be indebted."

About this period many of his letters are coloured more or less by the tone of thought excited by the death of Lord Liverpool and Mr. Canning. "Whatever span of life may yet be left to us," he said to Hannah More, "may we both be using our remaining days in preparation for the last. My friends are daily dropping around me. The companions of my youth, then far stronger and more healthy than I was, are worn out, while I still re-

main." And to Mr. Babington he says, "When you last wrote to me, you were under the influence of a feeling that has of late been called into exercise with me also: that which is excited by seeing our old friends dropping off one after another while we are left behind.

*'Hæc data pœna diu viventibus, ut renovata
Semper clade domus, multisque in luctibus, inque
Perpetuo mœrore et nigra veste senescant.'*

But how different are the emotions with which we may regard the deaths of our friends from those of the heathen poet! And it is one of the indirect rewards of such religious principles and habits as lead us to select our friends from the excellent ones of the earth, that we are not compelled to seek for comfort by forgetting the companions of our choice that are taken from us, but may follow them in our thoughts and sympathies into that paradise into which we trust they have been received, and may hope at no distant period to see them once more."

Something too of the same tone, blended touchingly with the liveliest affections, may be traced in a letter to a son on the continent.

*"York, July 22, Sunday, at Mr. Gray's,
a true Christian and old friend.*

"My very dear ——,

It fills my heart with thankfulness, to be assured that my dear children are on this day withdrawn from worldly occupations. I fancy to myself my dear, my very dear ——, (for dear at home becomes very dear abroad,) calling up before his mind's eye the images of absent friends, and I am encouraged by a better feeling than vanity, to cherish the hope that your old father has a place among them. Even were it a common day, (a week-day as it is termed,) writing to you at such a distance, when the thought that perhaps even at the very time in which I am addressing you, you may be no more, the thoughts and feelings of my heart would natu-

rally be of a serious colour; and when in relation to all my friends present or absent, my mind on this day is conversant with their highest interests, it must be peculiarly so in communicating with a very dear child who is perhaps a thousand miles off, and of whom I have not heard for several weeks. Whilst thinking of your geographical track, if I may so term it, I am led to the idea of your spiritual track—your *track home*, as it is phrased on the globes in the line that describes the voyages of our great circumnavigators. My mind has been the rather drawn to this reflection by yesterday's having been the birth-day of our beloved and, I confidently hope, sainted Barbara—already joined by our sweet little grandchild. There is something very affecting to my mind in this way of considering life, as a voyage in which 'track out' and 'track home' designate its opposite periods of youth and old age. Oh what cause have I for gratitude in the blessed influences of the Divine Spirit which has directed your course, and kept you from the rocks on which many, alas! make shipwreck! And He will still I trust watch over, and guide, and guard you even unto the end; and if it be consistent with the Divine will may I be spared to see you engaged in that most dignified of all services, that of superintending the best interests of your fellow-creatures, and guiding and gaurding them through this dangerous world to the haven of everlasting happiness and peace, to the rest that remaineth for the people of God. May God bless you. I am ever

Your most affectionate father,
W. WILBERFORCE."

He returned to Highwood in the height of the "Indian summer." The next morning was "delightful, dewy like autumn, but the sun full out and warm as summer." This was a very picture of his state of mind, with some of the dews of autumn, but still brightened by a noon-day sun. He had not yet become familiar with his Highwood residence, and his return to it not unnaturally weighed somewhat on his spirits. "It is so long since I

was here, that I really feel a stranger in my own house. I have had little leisure lately for reading, or rather for hearing, my life has been spent in chattering, and I feel strangely awkward in returning to my ordinary duties. My spirits quite sink at the idea of being here when my boys leave me. Oh how I long for a quiet lodging anywhere, where I might live as a collegian, having every thing found for me, and I only trying to do a little good with what powers are left me, and to work out my own salvation! Oh let me not distrust that mercy of God which has never failed me. I want to allot a day to devotional exercises."

These were not his habitual feelings; they were the diapason tones of a mind of infinite compass; but for the most part his latter years were eminently bright and cheerful. Never indeed was he more evidently happy than in that calm old age on which he entered with the elasticity of youth, and the simplicity of childhood. Gay, busy, social, and affable, tender without softness, and witty without sting, he was still the delight of old and young; and whether he was joining in the "animated talk amongst the young hands," or discoursing with his remaining equals, it was in the busiest and happiest groups that he was always to be found. His days at Highwood were very regularly spent. He rose soon after seven, spent the first hour and a half in his closet; then dressed, hearing his reader for three quarters of an hour, and by half-past nine met his household for family worship; always a great thing in his esteem. At this he read a portion of the Scriptures, generally of the New Testament, in course, and explained and enforced it, often with a natural and glowing eloquence, always with affectionate earnestness, and an extraordinary knowledge of God's word.

After family prayers, which occupied about half an hour, he never failed to sally forth for a few minutes

"To take the air and hear the thrushes sing."

He enjoyed this stroll exceedingly. "A delightful

morning. Walked out and saw the most abundant dew-drops sparkling in the sunbeams on the gazon. How it calls forth the devotional feelings in the morning when the mind is vacant from worldly business, to see all nature pour forth, as it were, its song of praise to the great Creator and Preserver of all things! I love to repeat Pslams civ. ciii. cxlv. &c. at such a season."

His habits had long since been formed to a late hour of breakfast. During his public life his early hours alone were undisturbed, and he still thought that meeting late tended to prolong in others the time of morning prayer and meditation. Breakfast was still prolonged and animated by his unwearied powers of conversation, and when congenial friends were gathered round him, their discussions lasted sometimes till noon. From the breakfast-room he went till post time to his study, where he was commonly employed long about his letters. If they were finished he turned to some other business, never enduring to be idle all the day. "H. is a man," he says after a wholly interrupted morning, "for whom I feel unfeigned esteem and regard, but it quite molests me to talk for a whole morning. Nothing done, and no accession of intellect." Soon after his retirement he was invited as an idle man to an amateur concert. "What!" he exclaimed, "music in a morning? Why it would be as bad as dram-drinking." Yet his love for music was as strong as ever. This very year he speaks of himself as "quite overpowered by the Hallelujah Chorus in the Messiah, a flood of tears ensued, and the impression on my mind remained through the day." But a long-continued conscientious use of time had stamped its value deeply on his mind. He was planning in this leisure season some further employment of his pen; a work on the Epistles of St. Paul, especially. "I have read Whateley's Essays on Scriptural Difficulties. That on St. Paul's Epistles exactly my own thoughts twenty years ago, and often about to be published." Weak health and his infirmity of sight still defeated his intention, and neither this work nor an additional chapter to

that on Christianity, in which he wished to address the old, were ever actually completed for the press.

About three o'clock, when the post had gone, he sallied forth into the garden, humming often to himself, in the gladness of his heart, some favourite tune, alone, or in the company of some few friends, or with his reader. Here he would pace up and down some sheltered sunny walk, rejoicing especially in one which had been formed for him by a son, and was called ever after, with some hint of affection, by his name.

"The picture which the dead leave on the minds of their survivors," says Mr. Gurney, "is not always lively or distinct. Although we may have fondly loved them, and may hallow the memory of their good qualities, we cannot always summon their image before us; but I venture to express my conviction, that no one who has been accustomed to observe Wilberforce will ever find the slightest difficulty in picturing him on the tablet of the mind. Who that knew him, can fail to recall the rapid movements of his somewhat diminutive form, the illumination of his expressive countenance, and the nimble finger with which he used to seize on every little object which happened to adorn or diversify his path? Much less can we forget his vivacious wit—so playful, yet harmless; the glow of his affections; the urbanity of his manners; and the wondrous celerity with which he was ever wont to turn from one bright thought to another. Above all, however, his friends will never cease to remember that peculiar sunshine which he threw over a company by the influence of a mind perpetually tuned to love and praise. I am ready to think there could be no greater luxury than that of roaming with him in solitude over green fields and gardens, and drawing out of his treasury things new and old."

This was most true of his hour of daily exercise. Who that ever joined him in it cannot see him as he walked round his garden at Highwood? Now in animated and even playful conversation, and then drawing from his copious pockets (to contain Dalrymple's State

Papers was their standard measure) some favourite volume or other; a Psalter, a Horace, a Shakspeare, or Cowper, and reading, and reciting, or "refreshing" passages; and then catching at long-stored flower-leaves as the wind blew them from the pages, or standing before a favourite gum cistus to repair the loss. Then he would point out the harmony of the tints, the beauty of the pencilling, the perfection of the colouring, and run up all into those ascriptions of praise to the Almighty which were ever welling forth from his grateful heart. He loved flowers with all the simple delight of childhood. He would hover from bed to bed over his favourites; and when he came in, even from his shortest walk, deposited a few that he had gathered, safely in his room before he joined the breakfast table. Often would he say, as he enjoyed their fragrance, "How good is God to us! What should we think of a friend who had furnished us with a magnificent house and all we needed, and then coming in to see that all had been provided according to his wishes, should be hurt to find that no scents had been placed in the rooms? Yet so has God dealt with us. Surely flowers are the smiles of his goodness."

He stayed out till near dinner, which was never after five, and early in the evening lay down for an hour and a half. He would then rise for a new term of existence, and sparkle through a long evening to the astonishment of those who expected, at his time of life, to see his mind and spirits flag, even if his strength was not exhausted. The whole evening was seldom spent in conversation, for he had commonly some book in "family reading" which was a text for multiplied digressions full of incident and illustration. His own hand has drawn a picture of these rational and happy evenings.

"I did not put down my pen," he concludes a letter, after annexing as the date "Friday night, forty minutes after eleven," "till the announcement of dinner rendered it necessary. After dinner I lay down, and through the kind care of my friends was suffered to sleep, as too commonly it happens, for an hour and three quarters."

I then came down, and after a little business heard the young Macaulays read passages from one of those numerous *Annals* which the wealth and animation of the present day supplies for interesting the faculties without labour or effort. We went to prayers, and after about half an hour, surely well spent, we returned to the common room and renewed our reading, which I just now stopped, finding how late it was, and being in the singularly favoured circumstances of an old fellow, who is allowed to say, 'Come, or go, do this, or do that,' without the appearance of frefulness. Then — by saying, 'Surely you will not think of finishing your letter at so late an hour,' reminded me that it was still on the stocks, and was to be launched into the post stream to-morrow morning. I owe however so much respect to her reasonable remonstrances, as to endeavour to abridge all that I might have added if I had taken up my pen in more favourable circumstances.

One word of what we have been reading—an article in one of the *Annals* on Gibbon and Madame de Stael, and latterly also on Voltaire. You remember, I doubt not, the last sentence in Gibbon's *Autobiography*; I have engaged my young friend to write under it Dr. Watts's beautiful hymn, ending with the line—'Foretells a bright rising again.' This is one of the '*Hymns for Children*,' but surely it is for the children of God, for the heirs of glory; and when you compare it, either in point of good sense, or imagination, or sterling value, or sustaining hope, with the considerations and objects which feed the fancy, or exercise the understanding or affections of the most celebrated men who have engaged the attention or called forth the eulogiums of the literati of the last century, you are irresistibly forced to exclaim in the spirit of my grand favourite,

'O happy Hymnist, O unhappy bard!'

Farewell, my dear —

Ever affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE."

As the evening wore away his thoughts took commonly this colour. After prayers as he walked up and down the room, he would have read to him missionary accounts, and journals of what was done by foreign Christians. This was his usual Sunday evening reading. "It is the most deeply interesting of all subjects, to observe how the contest is going on between light and darkness, what different spots of this rebellious province are being brought into subjection to their rightful Sovereign."

His love of books was still extreme. Though he could read little continuously he would pick out the pith of most works by a rapid glancing through the pages, and in every house he visited, he knew commonly within two days the full amount of its literary stores. His great complaint against his feeble eyesight was that it prevented his maintaining an accurate acquaintance with the great writers of antiquity. There were few modern works which he did not either thus run through, or have read to him, except "mere novels;" and his short criticisms show how little the acuteness of his mind was blunted. "Reading Lawrie Todd, but disliked and left it off—a stupidly told story—attempt at delineations of character very indifferently executed—no touches of nature or marked discriminations. Hearing Hallam's Constitutional History of England in Quarterly. Southey a bitter critic, and works him with great acuteness and force." "Hearing Lord Orford's Memoirs of George the Second's reign—very bitter, and prejudices great, yet accounts curious." "Scott's novels useful as the works of a master in general nature, and illustrative of the realities of past life. Looked at Pelham, most flippant, wicked, unfeeling delineations of life—to read such scenes without being shocked must be injurious. I am sorry — read it. For very shame I would not have it read to me." "We finished Sir Jonah Barrington's Autobiography. A true picture of a thorough man of the world, who professing to believe in Christianity, shows throughout his whole life not one single reference in thought or feeling, word or deed, to any Scriptural

principle or precept. On the other hand, the Scripture says, 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all to the glory of God.' "

In such occupations as these he would go on till very late; for from long use in parliament, "the midnight hour was his zenith, and like the beautiful cereus with all her petals expanded, he was then in full bloom."* This was especially the case when old and valued friends had gathered round him. Old age had scarcely lessened his relish for society, but it had drawn still closer the bonds of his affection for his early friends. "As I grow older," he told Mr. Gisborne, "I find myself growing more attached to such of the companions of my youth as are still left to me; and they are, I need not say, still more valued, when they are such as we may humbly hope we shall meet again in a better world." "When I was a younger man I was tempted to make intellectual conversation my all in all; but now I can truly say, that I prefer the society of the simplest person who fears God, to the best company of a contrary kind." This happy preference was the result of early watchfulness. After receiving a "very clever and entertaining man" many years before, "I must record the truth," he says, "I seldom have found myself more unspiritual, more indisposed to prayer, than after my party had left me. I could not somehow raise my mind to heavenly objects, alas, and so it has been partly this morning also. Is it that the society of an able worldly man is hereby indicated to be unsafe to me? I had a sort of struggle about inviting him, as if intimating the wish to be acquainted with an irreligious man, was showing too great a deference for talent. Is it a punishment that I have since felt so cold and wandering in my mind? I would not be nervous and superstitious, but I ought to watch and keep my heart with all diligence. O let me deal honestly with myself. Let me give up, however entertaining, even however instructive, whatever it seems the intimation of God that I should relinquish. O Lord, cause me to be

* Mr. Gurney's sketch.

so full of love, and zeal, and grateful loyalty, and child-like affection for my Saviour, that I may love them that love Thee; and may I thus become more in my tempers and frames of mind an inhabitant of heaven."

In great measure had this prayer been answered. "Do invite —— to come and see you," was the request this year of some of his family, naming one of the first men of the age for intellectual powers. He made no answer at the moment, but said afterwards in private, "I am sorry not to do what you wish, but so false and hollow as I think the man, I could have no comfort in his company. Only think what truth is; it is the very principle of gravitation in the moral world." Yet there was nothing of austerity about him. The playfulness of his good-tempered humour would often gild even serious remarks.

It is not a little interesting to trace the impression he now made on those who stayed with him at Highwood. "I remember," says the present Bishop of Calcutta, "his walking with me up and down his drawing-room some time beyond midnight; his figure is now in my mind, his benevolent eye, his kind, considerate manner of speaking, his reverence for Scripture, his address, the pauses he made in his walk when he had any thing emphatic to say. I recollect one sentiment was, that the passages so frequent in Scripture, importing the unwillingness of the Almighty that the sinner should perish, the invitations addressed to him to return, the remonstrances with him on his unbelief, &c. must be interpreted strictly and literally, or they would appear to be a mockery of man's misery, and to involve the most fearful imputations on the Divine character. Evasions of the force of such passages were, he thought, highly injurious, and went to sap the whole evidence and bearing of the Christian revelation.

"He had a delicate yet penetrating and microscopic insight into character. Observations minute, accurate, graphical, and often with a tinge of humour, dropped from him in conversation, and when quiet in his family he would imitate the voice and manner of the person he

was describing (generally some public man) in a way to provoke profuse merriment. Then he would check himself and throw in some kind remark. His charity indeed in judging of others, is a trait in his Christian character, which forces itself on my recollection. Of his benevolence I need not speak; but his kind construction of doubtful actions, his charitable language towards those from whom he most widely differed, his thorough forgetfulness of little affronts, were fruits of that general benevolence which continually appeared. The nearer you observed him the more the habit of his mind appeared obviously to be modest and lowly. He was in as little measure as possible elated by the love and esteem of almost the whole civilized world, which long before his death had been fixed upon him. It required some management to draw him out in conversation, and therefore some of those who saw him only once, might go away disappointed. But if he was lighted up, and in a small circle, where he was entirely at his ease, his powers of conversation were prodigious; a natural eloquence was poured out, strokes of gentle playfulness and satire fell on all sides, and the company were soon absorbed in admiration. It commonly took only one visit to gain over the most prejudiced stranger."

The following letter is an instance of this kind. Its writer came to Highwood Hill prejudiced against him by some who had maligned his character. After spending two days at the house, she wrote to a sister.

" Highwood Hill, April 12, 1828.

" You would hardly believe, my dear sister, that I find it much more difficult to write from this quiet country place, than from London. Yet I have thought of you more than ever, and how have I wished for you here, where there is so much that would interest and charm you! It is now past twelve, yet I am sitting up to finish what I began this morning; in no one moment before have I been able to do so, and I write after such a fatiguing day, that I feel as if all my powers of expressing myself were gone. Indeed I think I have been in a

delirium all the time that I have stayed here, from the excitement of being happier than for a long time past. Yet my happiness cannot be complained of, as it has consisted so much in watching the admirable conduct and feelings, and listening to the excellent conversation which appears to bring religion more near to the heart, and the heart more near to God.

“I can perfectly believe that those who have not seen Mr. Wilberforce in his own house, among his own family, and who have heard all the stories that have been told of him, may not give credit to the sincerity and purity of his intentions, but no one could see him as I have done without being charmed. I wish I could send you something of what I have heard in the beautifully simple explanations that he gives every day of a chapter that he reads from the Testament. Then if you could hear him reading, as he does, the poems in the ‘Christian year!’ I shall have much to tell you at some future time, of sentiments and ideas of his, all so beautiful, and so true, and so indulgent, for I think nothing more striking in him than that spirit of general benevolence which governs all that he says; joined to the extreme beauty of his voice, it does indeed make him appear ‘to love whatever he speaks of.’ Then he seems so thoroughly pleased to hear any anecdote in praise of any person who is talked about, and so ready to make allowance in others for the faults that he has not a taint of himself. Oh he is a dear, good, admirable old man! I have been praying that I may be enabled to imitate whatever is imitable in this excellent being; his talents and attractions are not to be acquired, but is it not a cheering reflection that such principles as his may be gained by all?”

One occupation of his time at Highwood is too characteristic to be omitted. Assistance to young men of promise had always been with him a favourite charity, and the inclination had been strengthened by the evident harvest he had sometimes reaped. To have been one of the first who assisted Kirke White would have been reward enough; but he had seen two others, who owed all

to him, fill with credit different judicial stations; and at this very time the highest honours of one of our Universities were obtained by two young men, for whose education he had in like manner assisted to provide. But now that he had time, he gave more than merely money; he made his house the home of one or two youths, the expense of whose education he defrayed; all their holidays were spent with him; and hours of his own time were profusely given to training and furnishing their minds. Nor were the poor forgotten; they were invited to join in his family worship on the Sunday evening, and sought out often in their cottages for instruction and relief.

CHAPTER XIV.

Difficulties in Building Chapel—Loss of Fortune—Retires to his Sons' Houses—Final Efforts in the Cause of Emancipation.

WHEN he first came to look at Highwood, he was "most struck by its distance from church—three miles;" and it was only on hearing that "a new chapel was probable," that he entered on the purchase. Three years had passed, and the hope of a chapel seemed further off than ever; he resolved therefore to avail himself of the new Church Building Acts, and erect one on Highwood Hill if he could obtain the sanction of the Commissioners.

But this good work was not to be completed without opposition and contention, in the midst of which he eminently manifested in private, as he had long done in public life, the meekness of true Christian wisdom under calumny and falsehood.

This most Christian undertaking involved him in cares and anxieties, subjected him to calumnies and drew him into controversies which embittered the remainder of his life, and it was not until a few days after his death, that

the chapel which he erected, at an expense of £4000, was opened for the worship of Almighty God.

Whilst this annoying business was in progress, his faith in God was proved by another trial. Though his style of living had always been below his income, he had never accumulated money. He had retrenched his expenses to give and not to save; and he had given largely and constantly. "You probably know," was an incidental testimony to his unseen charity, from a distant relation soon after his decease, "that it was very much owing to him that I was enabled during a very long period of years to live in an independent manner; and his tenderness and feeling in conferring obligations was such that they raised, not mortified, the objects of them. Whenever I alluded to the subject his usual reply was to this effect, 'Had our circumstances been changed, you would have acted towards me as I have done towards you.' To two others of my family his liberality laid the foundation of present usefulness, and I trust of future blessedness."

He had always therefore lived up to his income.

"He feared not once himself to be in need,
Nor cared to hoard for those whom he did breed :
The grace of God he laid up still in store,
Which as a stock he left unto his seed."

"I never intended to do more," he told his eldest son, "than not exceed my income, Providence having placed me in a situation, in which my charities of various kinds were necessarily large. But believe me there is a special blessing on being liberal to the poor, and on the family of those who have been so; and I doubt not my children will fare better even in this world, for real happiness, than if I had been saving £20,000 or £30,000 of what has been given away."

He had felt therefore some inconvenience from "reducing his rents, which were never high, full 37 per cent.," at a time when his family were most expensive to him. His property had been further lessened by his raising a considerable capital in order to embark his

eldest son, whose health appeared unequal to the practice of the law, in a large farming speculation, "to be actually managed" as he thought "by ——," a man in whose principles and practical acquaintance with the business, he at that time entertained the highest confidence. The event did not confirm his expectations; and in the very month when Mr. Williams's pamphlet* appeared, he found that to secure the remainder of his fortune, he must submit to the immediate and very heavy loss of nearly all the capital which had been invested in the business, and retrench greatly on his usual style of living. He makes this entry in his Diary, March 10th. "A most kind letter from the Bishop of Chester. Informed me that at a great meeting of the Commissioners (for building churches) Williams's attack upon me became the subject of discussion, and that no friend of mine could have wished more than was said about the character of both of us, and all in one story. A solitary walk with the psalmist. Evening quiet." Yet he was still as free from care as ever, two days after the full discovery of his loss. Amongst many gratifying instances of his unbroken cheerfulness, an interesting sample may be found in his renewed intercourse with Sir James Mackintosh, whom he now met frequently at Battersea Rise. "Mackintosh came in," he says, "and sat most kindly chatting with me during my dinner—what a paragon of a companion he is; quite unequalled!" "We are spending a little time at this to me deeply interesting place. I always visit the funeral urn—H. T. Jan. 16th, 1815—M. T. Oct. 12th, 1815. Sir James Mackintosh and his family now live in one of the houses which are built upon the ground which Henry (Thorn-ton) sold on the side opposite to that of C. Grant's house. He has been sitting chattering to the girls and myself for above an hour; and this extraordinary man spends, they tell me, much of his time in the circulating library

* This was the Vicar of the Parish in which he resided. He had published an abusive pamphlet accusing Mr. Wilberforce of falsehood, and attributing to him mercenary motives in the erection of the chapel.

room, at the end of the Common, and chats with the utmost freedom to all the passengers in the Clapham stage as he goes and comes from London. It is really to be regretted that he should thus throw away time so valuable. But he is at every body's service, and his conversation is always rich and sparkling."

Mackintosh's own account of this intercourse is peculiarly happy. "Do you remember Madame de Maintenon's exclamation, '*Oh the misery of having to amuse an old king, qui n'est pas amusable!*' Now if I were called upon to describe Wilberforce in one word, I should say he was the most '*amusable*' man I ever met in my life. Instead of having to think what subjects will interest him, it is perfectly impossible to hit on one that does not. I never saw any one who touched life at so many points; and this is the more remarkable in a man who is supposed to live absorbed in the contemplation of a future state. When he was in the House of Commons, he seemed to have the freshest mind of any man there. There was all the charm of youth about him. And he is quite as remarkable in this bright evening of his days as when I saw him in his glory many years ago."

"His mind," says a deeper observer,* "was of a highly discursive character; and it was often extremely amusing to observe how, while pursuing any particular subject, he was caught by some bright idea which flashed across his path, and carried him off (for a time at least) in a wholly different direction. This peculiarity belonged to his genius, and was a means of multiplying the instruction which his conversation afforded. But the volubility of his intellect was balanced by the stability and faithfulness of his moral qualities. When the happiness of man and the glory of God were in his view, he was for ever recurring to his point, and in spite of all his episodes of thought, was an assiduous, persevering, and undaunted labourer."

And such he still continued, when any great cause woke up his former fires. "Retired as he was from

* Joseph John Gurney.

public life," says Mr. Gurney, "and greatly enfeebled in his health, he no longer found his place in the van of the army, or in the heat of the battle; but both by speaking and writing he repeatedly bore his public testimony in favour of the great principles of the Abolitionists; and his warm encouragements and wise counsels were always ready to stimulate and direct the efforts of his friends."

But the sketch of this vigorous and cheerful mind would be exceedingly imperfect, if no hint were given of the hidden springs by which its freshness was maintained. A merely cheerful age is a melancholy sight to thoughtful men. "It quite lowers my spirits," was his own declaration at the conclusion of a visit, "to see people past seventy, so little apparently estranging themselves from worldly objects; it is most painful to me not to be able to converse with them on religion." His own cheerfulness rested on a surer basis. He was often thoughtfully retracing all "the way by which the Lord his God had led him." "How striking is the change of fifty years—then Samuel Smith and I travelled as bachelors, and now he has a house full of descendants; and I also have five children and a grandchild living, besides a daughter and sweet little grandson gone, I humbly trust, to a better world. Praise the Lord, O my soul. My dear, and I trust imparadised, child's birthday."

This same tone of thought may be traced in his letters to those with whom he was most intimate. "It is one of my frequent subjects of gratitude and praise, though not as frequently as it ought to be, that in the kind providence of God I was born an Englishman. Go through the whole earth, and enumerate every part of it, and you will find nothing like our own country. An Englishman too in this period of our country's existence, and in the middle station of life, &c. &c. &c. We do not, I am sure *I* do not, live sufficiently under the constant influence of this spirit of thankfulness; and I believe there is not any one, who has at all observed the dealings of Providence in his own instance with any

thing like a due measure of attention, who will not have seen many, many particulars in which he has been deeply indebted to the preventing or directing grace of God. It was the reproach, and among the chief causes of the condemnation of the pagan world, scanty as was the light they enjoyed compared with the brightness of our meridian day, that they 'were not thankful.' And still more the people of God were threatened with being cast off if they should not serve the Lord their God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things. How much more then should our hearts overflow with continual gratitude! I doubt not the want of this blessed disposition will constitute one of the leading articles in the condemnation of the unholy; and I have found rustics, as unassailable as a tortoise in every other quarter, feeling their weak and indefensible state in this point, when I have put it to themselves whether they have been in any due degree grateful to the God who gave them all their present blessings, and who gave His only Son to die for them, and to the Saviour, who for their sakes endured the unknown agonies of His bitter passion and cruel death."

With a grateful retrospect of life he combined a high value of the time which still remained to him. "What importance does it give to life when it is regarded in its true character as the probation in which are to become constitutional the dispositions which must form our meetness for the heavenly state! When the real purpose and grand end of life is compared with that low view of it which is taken by the votaries of ambition or even of literature and science, the contrast between the joys of children, and the researches and pursuits of manhood is a most feeble and inadequate illustration."

"The main fault of the present day," he now repeatedly declared, "is the making knowledge and intellectual advancement the great object of pursuit, instead of that moral improvement by which we may be fitted for a higher and better state. Much mystery overhangs the one, and time with an oblivious touch effaces the little we do attain of science; but blessed is he who attains

some lineaments of the moral image of God, for they shall see Him as He is, and then shall know even as now they are known." This conviction made him still watchful to redeem the time. "This evening," he says, Feb. 15th, "I expounded on the Epistle, 'So run that ye may obtain, &c. lest I should be a cast-away.' The second lesson this very evening is 1 Cor. ii., in which St. Paul relates his labour and suffering. And could pains be required by Him? O then, my soul, strive—to him that overcometh only, the promise is assured." "My future state should now be my grand, indeed comparatively speaking, my sole concern. God's kind providence has granted to me a residue of life after its business is over. I know I must be near death, perhaps very near it. I believe that on the state in which death finds me, will depend my eternal condition; and even though my state may now be such as to produce an humble hope that I am safe, yet by a wise improvement of my time, I may augment my eternal happiness, besides enjoying delightful communion with God in the interval. Let me then make the improvement of my soul the first grand business of my life, attending also to the good of others, if possible both by my pen, and conversation, and social intercourse."

In this spirit he continued still his rules of abstinence and self-denial, saying on Ash Wednesday, "We attend too little to these days;" and often secretly observing his fasting regulations—"disused pleasant food—Daniel. Entire fasting does not suit my constitution, but I attend to the principle." Often also did he now give up his days to more continuous devotion, employing thus especially his own and his children's birth-days, and noting in his Diary. "I had an interview of two hours and a quarter before dinner of unspeakable value. Why not secure many similar seasons? At my time of life what so proper or so likely to make me useful to others as thus walking with God?" It was not in vain that he thus watched and laboured. Through his later years he walked, in an eminent degree, with God, and was literally kept in perfect peace through every trial. Those

who lived with him and marked his unmixed cheerfulness could scarcely believe that he felt as much on relinquishing in 1831 his house at Highwood, as a letter written at the time implies.

“ Highwood, March 16.

“ My dear ——,

I wished that you should receive from myself rather than from the tongue of rumour, tidings which sooner or later were sure to be conveyed to you, and which I know would give you pain. The loss incurred has been so heavy as to compel me to descend from my present level, and greatly to diminish my establishment. But I am bound to recognize in this dispensation the gracious mitigation of the severity of the stroke. It was not suffered to take place till all my children were educated, and nearly all of them placed out in one way or another; and by the delay, Mrs. Wilberforce and I are supplied with a delightful asylum under the roofs of two of our own children. And what better could we desire? A kind Providence has enabled me with truth to adopt the declaration of David, that goodness and mercy have followed me all my days. And now when the cup presented to me has some bitter ingredients, yet surely no draught can be deemed distasteful which comes from such a hand, and contains such grateful infusions as those of social intercourse and the sweet endearments of filial gratitude and affection. What I shall most miss will be my books and my garden, though I own I do feel a little the not (for I know not how long if ever) being able to ask my friends to take a dinner or a bed with me, under my own roof. And as even the great apostle did not think the ‘having no certain dwelling place,’ associated with his other far greater sufferings, unworthy of mention, so I may feel this also to be some, though I grant not a great evil, to one who has so many kind friends who will be happy to receive him.”

His sure confidence was still in God. “He will not suffer me to be disgraced in my old age. What gives

me repose in all things, is the thought of their being his appointment. I doubt not that the same God who has in mercy ordered so many events for so long a course of time, will never fail to overrule all things both for my family and myself." And on recovering from a temporary illness, "I can scarce understand," he said, "why my life is spared so long, except it be to show that a man can be as happy without a fortune as with one."

It should be mentioned to the credit of our times, that by no less than six persons, one of them a West Indian, such private offers were now made to Mr. Wilberforce as would have at once restored his fortune. It was from no false pride that he declined entirely these friendly propositions, thinking it became his Christian character rather to adapt his habits to his present income. Towards his chapel at Mill Hill alone he consented to receive the assistance of his friends; and no less happy in receiving than in showing kindness, he carried always in his pocket and delighted to produce a well-worn list of their several contributions.

His leaving Highwood was soon followed by a trial of a different nature, the death of his surviving daughter. "Blessed be God," he says, during her illness, "we have every reason to be thankful for the state of mind we witness in her: a holy, calm, humble reliance on her Saviour, enables her to enter the dark valley with Christian hope, leaning as it were on her Redeemer's arm, and supported and cheered by the blessed promises of His gospel. We are in the hands of our heavenly Father, and I am sure no one has hitherto had such reason as myself to say that goodness and mercy have followed me all my days."

Now was seen the fruit of the high degree in which he had learned to "walk by faith rather than by sight." "I have often heard," he says, "that sailors on a voyage will drink 'friends astern' till they are half way over, then 'friends ahead.' With me it has been 'friends ahead' this long time." It was not by the slow process of reasoning, that he learned to regard this as a short separation, he at once felt they should not long be parted.

And he soon describes himself, "as enjoying as much peace and social comfort, as any ought to expect in this stormy world."

"I forget whether I sent you any particulars of the closing scene," he writes to Mr. Babington. "They were such as to call forth from our dear friend Sargent declarations of satisfaction and thankfulness, which will be sources of comfort and joy to Mrs. Wilberforce and myself as long as we live. The Monday after she was taken away we removed to St. Boniface, which we had taken in the hope of its conducing to her recovery. It is certainly one of the most delightful of all possible retirements. The most romantic scenery, sheltered from every cold wind, and abounding in the most delightful walks, both sea and inland. There the Sargents; my S. and his wife, and little toddler and prattler; my H. and ourselves passed a delightful fortnight. Really it was an oasis in the wilderness."

When Mr. Wilberforce left Highwood Hill, he intended to divide the year between the houses of his second and third sons. The latter already had a home fit for his reception in the Isle of Wight; and the former soon possessed one in the neighbourhood of Maidstone. "You will join me I am sure," he tells more than one amongst his friends, "in being thankful as well as rejoicing in my being able to inform you that Lord Brougham has given to my second son, (or rather I may say to me,) quite spontaneously and very handsomely, the living of East Farleigh. The parsonage is very little above a mile distant from Barham Court, and there must be many pleasant circumstances in being so near the residence, library, park, &c. of an old friend, of such dimensions. This event comes in such a way as strongly to confirm the persuasion that it is an indication of the favour of God; and I cannot but recognize a providential hand in Lord Brougham's being prompted to make the appointment just when we were in want of such a settlement and residence; though Lord Brougham knew nothing of the matter, and was quite unconsciously the instrument of granting us our wish."

Here and in the Isle of Wight, to the great joy of those he visited, his remaining years were spent. Personal reasons forbid the veil being lifted from his life as heretofore, and all the feelings shown with which his warm heart overflowed, now that he had become the parishioner and guest of his sons. But a few extracts from his Diary and letters will give the outline of his holy and peaceful age.

"We have now been here," he writes from one of his parsonage houses, "for about six weeks. How can I but rejoice rather than lament at a pecuniary loss, which has produced such a result as that of bringing us to dwell under the roofs of our dear children, and witness their enjoyment of a large share of domestic comforts, and their conscientious discharge of the most important of all professions."

"We are passing our time here very agreeably; indeed we might well use a much stronger term; for we should be void of all feeling if the warmest emotions of gratitude were not called forth in us, towards the gracious Ordainer of all things, for granting us, in the evening of life, after the tossings of the ocean of this world, such a quiet and comfortable haven. Here too we have the delightful spectacle of those whom we love most, enjoying a large measure of human life's sweetest enjoyments, combined with the diligent discharge of its most important duties. And then that lovely baby! What a manifest benevolence there is in the Almighty's having rendered young children so eminently attractive, considering the degree in which their very existence must depend on the disposition of those around them, to bear with their little infirmities, sustain their weakness, and supply their wants. How little could I expect to complete my seventy-second year! Yet it is on this day completed, and I am suffering no pain, and my complaints those which are salutary without producing great bodily suffering, like the kind suggestions of a friend tenderly watching over me, and endeavouring to obtain for me the benefits, without my feeling the evils commonly attendant on providential visitations. Really the loss of fortune has been delayed till it brings with it some posi-

tive comforts, without producing inconvenience or vexation ; my children's education being completed, and my parliamentary life quite finished. The necessity too of quitting my own house has not taken place till I am supplied with a choice of residences ; quite an *embarras des richesses* in the habitation line. O pray for me, my dear —, that my return of gratitude and service may be more commensurate with the rich stocks of blessings which the Almighty has poured out upon me."

His overflowing gratitude to God was the chief feature of his later years. Every thing became with him a cause for thanksgiving. When some of the infirmities of years began to press upon him, "what thanks do I owe to God," was his reflection, "that my declining strength appears likely not to be attended with painful diseases, but rather to lessen gradually and by moderate degrees ! How good a friend God is to me ! When I have any complaint it is always so mitigated and softened as to give me scarcely any pain. Praise the Lord, O my soul. I have had a feverish night, or rather a dreamy and disturbed one, but no headache or pain, D. G. What thanks do I owe to my gracious and heavenly Father !"

The details of his life at his parsonage residences were much what they had been of late at Highwood, except that greater quietness gave him more time for reading, and for those habits of devotional retirement which manifestly grew with his increasing years ; in which he found the Psalms and St. Paul's Epistles becoming more and more dear to him. He was still read to whilst he dressed ; and after thus hearing Sharon Turner's Sacred History, he notes in his pocket-book the importance of "meditating more on God as the Creator and Governor of the universe. Eighty millions of fixed stars, each as large at least as our sun. Combine the considerations hence arising with the madness and guilt of sin as setting up our will against that of God. Combine with it Christ's unspeakable mercy and love, and that of God in Christ."

This subject he had been accustomed to notice in his family exhortations. "The discoveries of astronomy,"

he said, "instead of having an opposite effect, warm my heart. I think of eighty millions of stars in one nebula, and of two thousand nebulæ, and I feel elevated and thankful to bear part in this magnificent creation, to be the child of Him who is the Governor of these boundless dominions." These thoughts often passed into meditations upon the moral attributes of God. "Retire into thy closet," is one of the last entries in his pocket-book, "and there let contemplation indulge her flights and expatiate." "I find unspeakable pleasure," he tells a friend, "in the declarations so often reiterated in the Word of God of the unvarying truth of the Supreme Being. To me there is something inexpressibly sublime in the assurance, that throughout the whole immeasurable extent of the all but infinite empire of God truth always extends, and like a master-key unlocks and opens all the mysterious wisdom and goodness, and mercy of the Divine dispensations."

His early walk, and his mid-day employments remained unaltered; and in the afternoon he still took as heretofore, considerable exercise; pacing at East Farleigh, during the winter, up and down a "sheltered, sunny, gravel walk;" and in the summer, climbing with delight at Brighthstone to the top of the chalk downs, or of an intermediate terrace, or walking along upon the unfrequented shore.

The following entry in his Diary occurs April 4th. "Like the finest summer day. The air singularly mild and balmy, and not a leaf stirring. S. engaged in at a cottage reading. R. drove me out in the pony-chaise: which very pleasant. Much affected this evening by my own reflections. Alas, I am an unprofitable servant, but God's mercy and Christ's love are inconceivably great. His ways (thank God) not as our ways. 5th. Day, if possible even sweeter than yesterday: as balmy and more air. Walked with my sons up the hill. This evening began Archdeacon Robinson's last days of Bishop Heber—had begun Sir Walter Scott's last work, but I felt desirous of something more spiritual."

His evenings were as bright as ever, and though his power of retaining new impressions was greatly im-

paired, the colours of his earlier recollections seemed scarcely to fade.

Notes were often made of his conversations which are highly interesting. On one occasion a sick person in the neighbourhood having been named "poor soul," he said, "how little we know of the afflictions of those in other ranks of life! I am quite abashed to think of them. I have to find sorrows for myself: God has so crowded His mercies upon me, I can fancy how delightful it would be to pour in oil and wine into her wounds. How wonderful is the power with which all the general statements of Scripture come home to the different circumstances of life! In how many instances, for example, does that parable of the good Samaritan direct us how to be truly pitiful!" And soon after, speaking of Herschel's saying, "These are things which must be for ever hid from man," he broke out, "No! that they shall not: I shall know all these things. Oh how low at the best are your wise men and philosophers! truly he that is least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he." He then began to speak of the astonishing truths of the Gospel. "Only think of that one declaration, God is perfect truth and perfect love. Why that one thought worked out is enough to fit a man for Heaven. Oh the goodness of God to me to bear all my provocations to him for so many years, and then not only hear my prayers, but give me grace to offer them." Here he stopped, quite overpowered by his feelings.

Low as was his estimate of all that he had actually done, it was easy to see, by the judgments which he formed of others, how much he now rejoiced in his earlier choice of objects and pursuits. "Much struck to-day," says his Diary, "with T. as the successful lawyer at his best. How little has he been (I fear) preparing for another world! His father was an artisan; what will it signify in a little time whether he had remained on that level or risen as he has?" "Thank God," was his common exclamation after parting with those who had drawn prizes in the lottery of worldly scenes; "Thank God that I was led into a different

path." "How much rather," he said to one of his sons as he drove by the splendid house of one whom he had always thought rapacious—"how much rather would I be living as I am on the wreck of my fortune, than have fattened as he has done upon the public!"

Never did any one see in him the least touch of regret for that which he had given up. "When a man chooses the rewards of virtue," he said with some little indignation, after hearing such complaints, "he should remember, that to resign the pleasures of vice is part of his bargain."

But that which was of all things most worthy of remark in his review of his past life, was his unfeigned humility. To himself he appeared "a sadly unprofitable servant," and needed constantly "the soothing consideration that we serve a gracious Master, who will take the will for the deed. Thou *didst* well (even the phraseology is indicative) that it was in thy heart." Any direct allusion to his services was met by some natural disclaimer, "that we each knew our own faults," and that he was deeply conscious of "neglected opportunities of service;" just as a friendly preface to his work on Christianity drew from him the remark, "Such things ought never to be published till a man is dead."

He had always detested flattery. Mr. Gisborne never saw in him so much display of temper as when, being addressed with servility by a person who wished for his favourable influence with Mr. Pitt, he threw the letter on the ground, with the exclamation, "How much rather would I have the man spit in my face!" This beautiful simplicity survived all the unfavourable influences of his life; and the old man whose name was a familiar word in every mouth, whose country parsonage was visited almost like a shrine, and who was told by Rammohun Roy, that when "he left the East, one of his chief wishes was to see Mr. Wilberforce," was still altogether lowly in his own sight, and could say with natural simplicity when treated in a place of public concourse with some marks of courtesy, "How very civil they were to me;

they made way for me, and treated me as if I were some great man!"

Almost the only growing mark of age was a still increasing love of that rest to which he was drawing nearer. "The grasshopper had become a burden to him," and he declined to settle a dispute which had been referred to him, with the excuse, "My spirits are now quite unequal to these unpleasant contentions." With the same feeling he replied, when pressed to take a part in an election contest, "I have retired and must be silent and neutral." When he looked out into the world from his retirement, it was in the faithful spirit of one who though not unacquainted with its storms, was more deeply learned in the secret of a quiet confidence in God. "I have felt my mind and spirits less affected than perhaps they ought to have been by the various clouds that are now gathering around us with such appalling blackness. Yet I trust that I may calmly, though humbly, resign myself to the gracious disposal of that great Being, who, I am sure, has mercifully poured out on me such unnumbered blessings, and so allayed with mitigating kindness the few trials to which I have been subjected, as to give me cause to look up to Him and address Him as my heavenly Father. For my own part, I quite rejoice in being out of all the bustle and turmoil of political life."

He now never met a friend of earlier days, whose principles were different from his own, (and such he took great pains to see,) without following up their intercourse with a long and friendly letter on their most important interests, pressing mainly on them, that it was not yet too late for them to make the better choice. "This is what they need," he repeated often; "they get to think that they are in for it, and that though they have chosen ill it is too late to alter. I well remember going to my old friend Lord — in his last illness. I had spoken to him fully on religious matters many years before, and he had seemed to pay no attention to me. I had heard that he was taken ill, and called upon him. When I had sat some time chatting with him, but without alluding to re-

ligious matters, another friend came in and asked 'How are you to-day?' 'Why,' was his reply, 'as well as I can be with Wilberforce sitting there, and telling me that I am going to hell.'" The conversation which had thus sunk into his mind had been affectionate and open. "I never can believe," he had said, "some parts of the Scripture." "How can you expect," was the reply, "to be able to believe, when you only turn your mind to the difficulties of the subject?" But what had made his friend read this language in his looks, was very much that sense of hopelessness which he was most desirous to correct. "At all events," said another at the close of such a conversation, "if you are right it is now too late for me to alter. I am in for it." "No," he answered earnestly, "my dear P., it is not too late, only attend to these things and you will find it true, 'him that cometh unto Me I will in no wise cast out.'"

To such calls as these he was still alive, but from all common business he withdrew as much as possible; and could not "leave the quiet of his country retirement even for the most friendly asylum, without his spirits failing him," and praying, "that in proportion as" he "grew unfit for the bustle of life," he "might become more and more harmonized with the sentiments and dispositions of a better world. His need of its waters still carried him to Bath, and he paid a few short visits to his oldest and most valued friends.

Though he had two years before "resolved never more to speak in public," he was induced, upon the 12th of April, 1833, to propose at a meeting in the town of Maidstone, a petition against slavery. His own signature was put to this petition, and with all his earlier spirit, he would not allow the appointment of delegates, a measure commonly adopted, but inconsistent he maintained with the spirit of the constitution. It was an affecting sight to see the old man who had been so long the champion of this cause come forth once more from his retirement, and with an unquenched spirit, though with a weakened voice and failing body, maintain for the last time the cause of truth and justice.

There was now no question about immediate emancipation; but the principle of compensation was disputed, and on this his judgment and his voice were clear. Ten years before he had proposed to Mr. Canning that a fund should be formed for indemnifying those who should be proved in fact to suffer by a change in the West Indian system; but to admit the principle of previous compensation for expected injury was only to postpone for ever all improvements of the system. Against this therefore he all along contended, even whilst he maintained that Great Britain "owed smart money" for her former encouragement of the Slave Trade. He hailed therefore with joy the proposal to atone for these offences by the grant of twenty millions; and in this his last speech at once declared, "I say, and say honestly and fearlessly, that the same Being who commands us to love mercy, says also, Do justice, and therefore I have no objection to grant the colonists the relief that may be due to them for any real injuries, which they may ultimately prove themselves to have sustained. But it must be after an impartial investigation of the merits of each case by a fair and competent tribunal. I have no objection either, to make every possible sacrifice which may be necessary to secure the complete accomplishment of the object which we have in view; but let not the inquiry into this matter be made a plea for perpetuating wrongs for which no pecuniary offers can compensate."

CHAPTER XV.

Illness and Death.

AND now the time was come, when his dust was to return to the earth, and his spirit to God who gave it. On the 20th of April he left East Farleigh, and after a short visit to the Isle of Wight, arrived at Bath on the

17th of May. The waters to which in great measure he owed the prolongation of his life till his 74th year, would help, it was hoped, to throw off the effects of the influenza, from which he had suffered greatly upon leaving Kent. But here his strength visibly declined, and it was soon seen, that if his life was spared, it would be but for a season of weakness and suffering. During two months which he spent there, he suffered much from pain and languor; and though he displayed the most unvarying patience, yet the excellent bust executed at this time by Joseph, shows, beautiful as it is, that his outward tenement was fast hastening to decay. But while all around him were full of thought about himself, his own anxiety was altogether for two of his daughters-in-law: for, a month only before his removal, two grandsons were born to inherit the name of William Wilberforce.

“Et quasi cursores vitæ lampada tradunt.”

This event is the last recorded in a pocket-book which he always carried with him. Other of his thoughts may be traced in its pages, by a set of references to the “closing scene of several memorable men.”

All his thoughts and conversation now savoured of the better world to which he was drawing near. At this time he was consulted by a young friend who was doubtful what profession to choose, but inclined towards the army or navy. “Think particularly,” he said, “whether you are choosing for time only, or for eternity. For of course a sensible man will wish to choose that which will be best on the long run. And then it is just as much part of the consideration what will be best for me between my thousandth and two thousandth year as between my twentieth and thirtieth. It is curious how our estimate of time is altered by its being removed to a distance. Ask how long did Moses live before Christ. If a man says 1300 years, and you correct him, 1500: poh! why be so accurate? Within 200 years will do. But how immense 200 years *now* seem!”

Meanwhile the calmness with which he was preparing to close his own career is apparent from the following letter.

TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD CALTHORPE.

(Private.)

“Bath, June 27, 1833.

“My dear Calthorpe,

You have been very kindly liberal about franks, and I really feel your kindness, and did not mean you should be called on so largely. To confess the truth to you, as really, and not merely in name, a friend, I will state that three or four days ago I thought I was breaking up rapidly as well as seriously. There has been I think an amendment subsequently, which leads me to believe that my decline is proceeding less rapidly than I had supposed, though not less seriously. There has been a general disposition in the system to the deposition of water, and this sluggishness of the absorbents is a very common mode in which they whose constitutions are rather feeble, and who are favoured with a gradual exit, actually decay. I thought you would like to know this, and therefore would not keep it from you.

I hear with real pleasure that your dear sister is well, and that dear Lady Charlotte is about to afford another security against the extinction of the Calthorpe name. My dear friend, may God bless and prosper you, especially in the most important particulars. Oh what cause for thankfulness have you for having been called to the knowledge and feeling of salvation through the Redeemer! May you grow in grace more and more. Give my affectionate remembrances to Lady Charlotte, and Frederick, also to Miss Calthorpe when you next write, and be assured I am

Ever sincerely and affectionately yours,

W. WILBERFORCE.

The cover I enclose is to spare the finances of a widow with six or seven children, and a very slender

pecuniary provision. It is to introduce her to some acquaintances at the place where she has fixed for a time."

It had always been his feeling that the most fitting state for the last hours of life, was one free alike from excitement and from terror; in which while the mind was conscious of the awful nature of the approaching change, it could yet resign itself to its reconciled, all-merciful Father, with the humility as well as the confidence of a child. He often mentioned it as a proof of great wisdom, that while the younger believer is described by Bunyan in his *Pilgrim's Progress* as passing easily through the stream of death, a less buoyant hope and a deeper flood is represented as the portion of the aged Christian. "It is the peculiarity," he said, "of the Christian religion, that humility and holiness increase in equal proportions."

But his own mind was as remarkable for its thankfulness and peace as for its humility. His youngest son, who was with him at this period, recorded at the moment various memoranda of his state of feeling. "Saturday, July 6th, he was taken ill, quite suddenly, while sitting at dinner. I ran for a medical man, and before I returned he was got to bed. He was suffering much from giddiness and sickness, but his words to me were, 'I have been thinking of the great mercy of God in trying me with illness of this kind, which, though very distressing, is scarcely to be called pain, rather than with severe suffering, which my bodily constitution could hardly bear.' When his medical attendant came, 'Thank God,' he said, 'I am not losing my faculties.' 'Yes, but you could not easily go through a problem in arithmetic or geometry.' 'I think I could go through the Asses' Bridge,' he replied. 'Let me see;' and began, correcting himself if he omitted any thing. Of course his attendant stopped him.

"About eight o'clock, on being asked how he felt, he said, 'What cause have I for thankfulness! I have been all day almost as comfortable as if I had been pretty

well. I have slept a good deal, and I have so many people who are kind to me. I am sure I feel deeply my servants' attention.'

"Alluding to a remedy which was provided for some present discomfort, he burst out repeatedly into exclamations on the goodness of God in these little things, providing means to remedy the various inconveniences of sickness. To this subject he several times recurred, with the remark, 'How ungrateful men are in not seeing the hand of God in all their comforts! I am sure it greatly adds to our enjoyment to trace His hand in them.'

"Soon after he said, 'What is that text, 'He hath hid pride from man?' I was thinking how God had taught him the folly of pride, because the most beautiful and delicate woman, and the proudest man, of the highest birth and station, who was never approached but with deference and formality, is exposed to exactly the same infirmities of this body of our humiliation that I am.' He was repeating mentally the 51st Psalm, and asked me to look what came next after the eleventh verse, 'Take not Thy Holy Spirit from me.' I read, 'Oh give me the comfort of Thy help again.' 'It is very odd, I thought it had been 'Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation.' Do look what it is in the Bible Version.' I found it as he said. 'What a very remarkable passage! It seems like an anticipation of the privileges of the new dispensation.'

"He spoke much of the delight which he had in the affection and care of his wife and children. 'Think what I should have done had I been left; as one hears of people quarrelling and separating. 'In sickness and in health' was the burden, and well has it been kept.' (Here she came in.) 'I was just praising you.'

"Generally, I should say, that except in his remark about pride, there was hardly a word he uttered that was not a bursting forth of praise. 'What cause it is for thankfulness, he exclaimed, 'that I never suffer from headache!'

"Half-past eight, Sunday morning. 'Remember, my

dear H.,’ he said, ‘that it is Sunday morning, and all our times here are very short. I am sure the manner of my dismissal, as far as it has yet gone, has been most gracious. I have not had so much time here for reading Scripture as I wish, but I rejoice at having laid in a knowledge of it when I was stronger. I hope you always take care of that. From our familiarity with it, we do not feel about the Scripture at all as we should do, if we were to hear for the first time that there was a communication from God to man.

“‘Think of our Saviour coming down from heaven, and, when one feels what a *little* pain is, submitting to all that he endured; having the nails roughly driven through his hands. To be sure the thought of our Saviour’s sufferings is so amazing, so astonishing, I am quite overwhelmed. Next to the horrible driving of the nails, I have thought most of His being given over to the insults of the Roman soldiery, when one thinks what brutal fellows they were. His sufferings were not alleviated as mine are by the kindness of those about Him.

“‘I have been thinking of that delightful text, which has often comforted me, ‘Be careful for nothing, &c.’ (He went on as far as ‘The peace of God shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.’) ‘To be sure,’ (he spoke with his voice faltering with emotion,) ‘it is the same Almighty power which enables Him to watch over all the world, every creature, beast, bird, or insect, and to attend to all the concerns of every individual.’

“‘Four o’clock. Dinner time. ‘I am a poor creature to-day,’ he said. ‘I cannot help thinking if some of the people who saw me swaggering away on the hustings at York could see me now, how much they would think me changed. What a mercy to think that these things do not come by chance, but are the arrangement of infinite wisdom!

“‘When I think how many poor people are suffering, without the luxuries that I possess, and the kind friends I have about me, I am quite ashamed of my comforts.’

“Five o’clock. ‘I cannot help thinking there was some mistake about my medicine; but it does not matter. There is nothing sinful in it.’

“Toussaint Louverture was mentioned in the evening. ‘I sent word,’ he said, ‘to Sir Walter Scott that he had not at all done justice to that part of his History, (of Buonaparte,) and he replied, that if I would point any thing out to him, he would willingly alter it. I wanted dear Stephen to do it, but he did not. I am very sorry for it, but it must be known sooner or later. To be sure to make a treaty of amity and friendship with a man, and then have him and his family seized and sent on ship-board, and finally to the chateau of Joux. . . . And then a veil is drawn over it. None knows what happened. What a story there will be there, when this world shall give up its dead! It was something like the case of the Duc D’Enghien, but worse.’

“Eleven, p. m. ‘I feel more comfortable than I have done for I know not how long. Never had a man such cause for thankfulness as I have, and above all, that I have so many, many kind friends to do every thing for me. My own son, and my own wife. I am quite ashamed of my comforts, when I think of Him who had not where to lay His head.’

“Tuesday, four o’clock. Reading some of Cecil’s remarks. ‘Nothing can be more opposite than that spirit of the present day, which shows itself for instance in the pride of literature, to the spirit of Christianity. Compare this bold, independent, daring spirit, with the beatitudes. ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit. Blessed are they that mourn. Blessed are the meek.’ Nothing surely can be so contrary to what ought to be the spirit of a creature who feels in himself the seeds of corruption.

‘Mrs. Hannah More told me that towards the end of Johnson’s life, if he was asked how he was, he would answer ‘rather better, I thank my God through Jesus Christ.’ And so to whatever he was asked.’

A friend, who happened to be passing through Bath, two days afterwards, (July 11th,) paid him a visit which he thus describes. “When I arrived at the house on the

South Parade which he then occupied, I found that he had been suffering severely from a bilious attack ; and his lady, whose attentions to him were most tender and unremitting, appeared to be in low spirits on his account. Still there then appeared no reason to apprehend the near approach of death.

“ I was introduced to an apartment up-stairs, where I found the veteran Christian reclining on a sofa, with his feet wrapped in flannel ; and his countenance bespeaking increased age since I had last seen him, as well as much delicacy. He received me with the warmest marks of affection, and seemed to be delighted by the unexpected arrival of an old friend. I had scarcely taken my seat beside him before . . . it seemed given me to remind him of the words of the Psalmist ; ‘ Although ye have lien among the pots yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold ;’ and I freely spoke to him of the good and glorious things, which, as I believed, assuredly awaited him in the kingdom of rest and peace. In the mean time the illuminated expression of his furrowed countenance, with his clasped and uplifted hands were indicative of profound devotion and holy joy.

“ Soon afterwards he unfolded his own experience to me in a highly interesting manner. He told me that the text on which he was then most prone to dwell, and from which he was deriving peculiar comfort, was a passage in the Epistle to the Philippians ; ‘ Be careful for nothing, but in every thing by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God ; and the peace of God which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ.’ While his frail nature was shaking, and his mortal tabernacle seemed ready to be dissolved, this ‘ peace of God,’ was his blessed and abundant portion.

“ The mention of this text immediately called forth one of his bright ideas, and led to a display, as in days of old, of his peculiar versatility of mind. ‘ How admirable,’ said he, ‘ are the harmony and variety of St. Paul’s smaller Epistles !—You might well have given an argu-

ment upon it in your little work on evidence. The Epistle to the Galatians contains a noble exhibition of doctrine. That to the Colossians is a union of doctrine and precept, showing their mutual connexion and dependence; that to the Ephesians is seraphic; that to the Philippians, is all love.'

" 'With regard to myself,' he added, 'I have nothing whatsoever to urge, but the poor Publican's plea, 'God be merciful to me a sinner.' These words were expressed with peculiar feeling and emphasis, and have since called to my remembrance his own definition of the word mercy—'kindness to those who deserve punishment.' What a lesson may we derive from such an example! It may awfully remind us of the apostle's question—'If the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the sinner and ungodly appear?' " *

The predominance of these feelings may be seen in a remark which he made to his son a few days afterwards, speaking of his dangerous attack the week before, "You must all join with me," he said, "in praying that the short remainder of my life may be spent in gaining that spirituality of mind which will fit me for heaven. And there I hope to meet all of you."

After he had spent two months at Bath, it was thought advisable that he should consult Dr. Chambers, from whose skill he had derived great benefit in 1824. He set out therefore towards London, though with no expectation on his own part of recovering. "There is no one now," he said, "that I can be useful to, but we should always be trying to follow, in every respect, God's indicated will." His purpose was to spend a few days at a house which was lent him by his cousin, Mrs. Lucy Smith, of whose kindness he readily availed himself, observing, that it was his "test of having a regard for a person when he liked to receive favours from them. One likes to confer them upon every one, but only to receive

* Familiar Sketch, by Joseph John Gurney. His son has recorded the last remark as "The Epistle to the Philippians is social and domestic."

them from real friends. I am sure I used always to think, as soon as I went out of my house, which of my friends there was to whom I could lend it. It was such a pleasure to think, when I could not enjoy it myself, that they did." He commenced his journey on the 17th of July, and on the 19th arrived in Cadogan Place, Sloane Street.

Thus was he again carried along the road, which forty-five years before he had traversed in apparently a dying state, and his mind seemed to travel back through the long space which had intervened. "How differently time appears," he said to his son while they halted at an inn, "when you look at it in the life of an individual, and in the general mass! Now I seem to have gone through such a number of various scenes, and such a lapse of time, and yet when you come to compare it with any great period of time—fifty years—think how little fifty years seems: why it is 3000 years since the Psalms which I delight in, were written. By the way (turning to his servant,) I have not my Psalter this morning. Do you know where it is?"

The day after he reached town, he expressed himself as "very anxious to dedicate the short remainder of time God might yet allot him, to the cultivation of union with Christ, and to the acquiring more of His spirit. My private prayers," he said, "are much the same as those in the family, pardon and grace. To-night [Saturday] particularly with regard to the week past."

"Perhaps I have been wrong in not praying more with others. But I never felt that I could open my heart with perfect freedom and sincerity, and the idea of doing otherwise in praying to Almighty God. . . Now I own many good men use expressions which I cannot use; for instance, about their own corruption. I HOPE no man on earth has a stronger sense of sinfulness and unworthiness before God than I. But they speak as if they did not feel the wish to do the will of God, and I am sure I cannot say that. Now S. in his prayers, often uses expressions of that kind, which quite amaze me in a man so sincere as he is."

When he reached London parliament was still sitting, and many of his friends flocked around him. "What cause it is for thankfulness," he said, "that God has always disposed people to treat me so kindly, and with such attention! Popularity is certainly a dangerous thing;"—[then after a pause;]—"the antidote is chiefly in the feeling one has; how very differently they would regard me, if they knew me really!" A friend who at this time came in asked, "Well! how are you?" "I am like a clock which is almost run down." On the Monday after his arrival, he received a visit from a party of children. After they were gone, he said "What a delightful thing it is to think how many inhabitants are being trained up there for heaven! For when the means of grace are used, one does see, I think, that God so very greatly, one may say universally blesses them."

His public conduct had not prevented him from keeping up a friendly connexion with many West Indians; who gave full credit to his sincerity. One of his last visitors was a member of a great West Indian family; and to his son's remark that this circumstance produced no effect upon his feelings—"Oh when we really believe a man to be serving God," he answered, "I delight in trampling on all these little points. Some one said, 'I trample on impossibilities.' I do not quite say that; but all these little distinctions are overwhelmed, annihilated, in the case of a person with whom I trust, (speaking with deep seriousness,) for my own sake, I may meet hereafter."

"How thankful should I be," was his remark to a friend who now came in, "that I am not lying in severe pain, as so many are! Certainly, not to be able to move about is a great privation to me; but then I have so many comforts, and above all, such kind friends—and to that you contribute."

"At this time," says another member of his family, "I arrived in London to see him, and was much struck by the signs of his approaching end. His usual activity was totally suspended by a painful local disorder, which prevented him from walking. The morning of Friday

(July 26th) was pleasant, and I assisted before his breakfast to carry him in a chair to the steps in front of the house, that he might enjoy the air for a few moments. Here he presented a most striking appearance, looking forth with calm delight upon trees and grass, the freshness and vigour of which contrasted with his own decay. It was nearly his last view of God's works in this their lower manifestation. 'The doors' were soon 'to be shut in the streets, and those that look out of the windows to be darkened.'

"His manner at this time was more than usually affectionate, and he received with great cheerfulness the visits of many old associates, from whom he had long been separated. The last words which I heard from him related to one of these, whose religious opinions he had many years lamented. 'How truly amiable he is, yet I can never see him without the deepest pain!' On Friday afternoon I left him with the intention of preparing to receive him, on the following Tuesday, not knowing that before that time he was to be a 'partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light.'"

It was altogether a striking combination of circumstances that he should have come to London at that time—to die. The Bill for the Abolition of Slavery was read for the second time in the House of Commons on the Friday night, and the last public information he received was, that his country was willing to redeem itself from the national disgrace at any sacrifice. "Thank God," said he, "that I should have lived to witness a day in which England is willing to give twenty millions sterling for the Abolition of Slavery." His state of health had latterly induced many of his friends to express their hope that he might be allowed to witness the consummation of the fifty years' struggle, and might then retire in peace; and so strong was this presentiment, that one of them speaks of writing to take leave of him so soon as the Bill for the Abolition of Slavery was known to be in progress. That this anticipation should be so exactly realized added signal interest to an event, which in the course of nature might be shortly expected.

Not less remarkable was it that London, which of late he had seldom visited, and where he purposed to remain but a day or two, should be the place of his departure. Yet had it been otherwise, his funeral could hardly have presented the circumstances, which made it the fit termination of such a life. The concurrence of two such incidents seemed providentially designed to fix public attention on his closing scene, that so the aged Christian might be marked out by the public voice, as the man whom his country "delighted to honour."

On the evening of Friday, however, he seemed so much better, that there was every reason to suppose he would be able to leave town on the Tuesday. His youngest son has again recorded some of his remarks. "A review in the Quarterly was read to him, (Rush's Residence,) which spoke of the Duke of Wellington's ability in council. 'Most true,' he said. 'I suppose you have never seen them, but when the Duke of Wellington commanded in Spain, and his brother the Marquis Wellesley was sent to conduct the negotiation, the papers containing the despatches of the two brothers were printed by parliament, and I remember thinking, that I had never seen any thing at all equal to them in talent. I remember hearing too, that of all the persons who gave evidence about Finance, the Duke of Wellington and Lord Harrowby knew most of the subject.'

"Some of his concluding remarks this evening were on the number of friends by whom he was surrounded. 'I do declare,' he said, 'that the delight I have in feeling that there are a few people whose hearts are really attached to me, is the very highest I have in this world. And as far as the present state is concerned, what more could any man wish at the close of life, than to be attended by his own children, and his own wife, and all treating him with such uniform kindness and affection?'"

His son concludes his notes this evening. "On the whole, what appears to me characteristic in his state of mind is chiefly this: there seems to be little anticipation, though he is strongly impressed with a feeling that he is

near his end; much nearer than from what his physician says I trust is the case. He speaks very little as if looking forward to future happiness; but he seems more like a person in actual enjoyment of heaven within: he hardly speaks of any one subject except to express his sense of thankfulness, and what cause he feels for gratitude. This is the case even in speaking of the things which try him most. Thus, talking of his being kept from exercise, 'What cause for thankfulness have I that I am not lying in pain, and in a suffering posture, as so many people are! Certainly it is a great privation to me from my habits not to be able to walk about, and to lie still so much as I do, but then how many there are who are lying in severe pain!' And then he will break out into some passionate expression of thankfulness."

"The next morning, July 27, his amendment seemed to continue. To an old servant who drew him out in a wheel chair, he talked with more than usual animation, and the fervency with which he offered up the family prayer was particularly noticed. But in the evening his weakness returned in a most distressing manner, and the next day he experienced a succession of fainting fits, to which he had been for two years subject, which were followed by much suffering, and which for a time suspended his powers of recollection. His physician pronounced that if he survived this attack it would be to suffer much pain, and probably also with an impaired understanding. During an interval in the evening of Sunday, 'I am in a very distressed state,' he said, alluding apparently to his bodily condition. 'Yes,' it was answered, 'but you have your feet on the Rock.' 'I do not venture,' he replied, 'to speak so positively; but I hope I have.' And after this expression of his humble trust, with but one groan, he entered into that world where pain and doubt are for ever at an end. He died at three o'clock in the morning of Monday, July 29th, aged 73 years and 11 months.

Mr. Wilberforce had chosen for the place of his interment, in accordance with a promise made to his brother-in-law, Mr. Stephen, a vault at Stoke Newington, where

his sister and his daughter had been buried. A direction to this effect was given in his will, a circumstance however not actually ascertained till after the funeral. But his family had no hesitation in acceding to a request made by the Lord Chancellor and nearly forty other Peers, that he should be buried in Westminster Abbey with public honours. Still they thought it fitting to avoid all such parade as was inconsistent with the situation of a private gentleman. It was his characteristic distinction that, without quitting the rank in which Providence had placed him, he had cast on it a lustre peculiarly his own. Nothing therefore could be more appropriate, than that the Bishops of the Church, the Princes of the Blood, the great warrior of the age, the King's chief servants, and the highest legal functionaries—whatever England had most renowned for talent and greatness—should assemble as they did around his unpretending bier. His simple name was its noblest declaration.

When his funeral reached Westminster Abbey on Saturday, Aug. 5th, the procession was joined by the members then attending the two Houses of Parliament. Public business was suspended; the Speaker of the House of Commons, the Lord Chancellor, one Prince of the Blood, with others of the highest rank took their place as pall-bearers beside the bier. It was followed by his sons, his relations, and immediate friends. The Prebendary then in residence, one of his few surviving college friends, met it at the Minster gate with the Church's funeral office; and whilst the vaulted roof gave back the anthem his body was laid in the north transept, close to the tombs of Pitt, Fox, and Canning.

It is impossible to conclude this history without observing the striking testimony which it bears to that inspired dictate: "Godliness has the promise of the life that now is as well as of that which is to come." If ever any man drew a prosperous lot in this life, he did so, who has been here described. Yet his Christian faith was from first to last his talisman of happiness. Without it the buoyancy of youthful spirits led to a frivolous waste of life not more culpable than unsatisfying. With

it came lofty conceptions,—an energy which triumphed over sickness and languor, the coldness of friends and the violence of enemies,—a calmness not to be provoked,—a perseverance which repulse could not baffle. To these virtues was owing the happiness of his active days. Through the power of the same sustaining principle, his affection towards his fellow-creatures was not dulled by the intercourse of life, nor his sweetness of temper impaired by the irritability of age. A firm trust in God, an undeviating submission to His will, an overflowing thankfulness,—these maintained in him to the last that cheerfulness which this world could neither give nor take away. They poured even upon his earthly pilgrimage the anticipated radiance of that brighter region, to which he has now doubtless been admitted. For “THE PATH OF THE JUST IS LIKE THE SHINING LIGHT WHICH SHINETH MORE AND MORE UNTO THE PERFECT DAY.”

APPENDIX.

The following Memoranda, dictated by Mr. Wilberforce, were found among his papers.

More private.

It would indicate a strange insensibility to the ways of a gracious Providence, if I were to suffer the circumstance of my having Dr. Milner for my fellow-traveller to pass without observation. Wishing for an intelligent and agreeable companion, I requested my friend, Dr. Burgh of York, to accompany me, a man of whom it is difficult for me to speak with moderation, full as my memory must ever be of marks of a kindness that could scarcely be exceeded, and of a disposition always to forget himself, and to be ready to conform to his friend's wishes. A fund of knowledge of various kinds, great cheerfulness of temper, and liveliness of fancy, rendered him a delightful companion. But he had qualities also of a higher order—an entire conviction of the truth of revelation; a considerable acquaintance with ecclesiastical history; just principles of religion; and as affectionate a heart as ever warmed a human bosom; with a continual promptitude to engage in every office of benevolence: but the habit of associating with companions, and living for the most part in society which, whatever might be the opinion assented to by the understanding, exhibited no traces of spirituality in its ordinary conversation, had induced a habit of abstaining from all religious topics in his common intercourse, and even an appearance of levity which would have pre-

vented his being known, except by those who were extremely intimate with him, or rather by those who being themselves also religious were likely to draw forth his secret thoughts and feelings, to have any more reflection than that average measure for which we are to give people credit, whose only visible attention to religion consists in their going to church on a Sunday. A gracious Providence prepared him, I doubt not, by a long illness for that change which he was to experience much sooner than could have been anticipated from the uncommon strength of his constitution, and the temperance of his habits; but had he been my fellow-traveller I should never have benefited by him in the most important of all concerns; indeed I am persuaded that we neither of us should ever have touched on the subject of religion except in the most superficial and cursory way.

To my surprise Dr. Burgh declined accepting my proposal, and I next invited Dr. Milner to accompany me, chiefly prompted by his acknowledged talents and acquirements, and by my experience of his cheerfulness, good nature, and powers of social entertainment. It was the more important to me to secure such a fellow-traveller, because we were to have a tête-à-tête in my carriage; the ladies of my party travelling with their maids in a coach. It is somewhat curious, that, as I learned accidentally long afterwards, my grandfather had declared that in after-life I should go abroad with Isaac Milner as my tutor. I am bound to confess that I was not influenced to select Dr. Milner by any idea of his having religion more at heart than the bulk of our Cambridge society; and in fact, though his religious opinions were the same as his brother's, yet they were then far from having that influence over his heart and manners which they subsequently possessed; though it is due to him to declare that his conduct was always what is called correct and free from every taint of vice, and he had a warmth of benevolence which rendered him always ready to every good work. I must go further; had I known at first what his opinions were, it would have decided me against making him the offer; so

true is it that a gracious hand leads us in ways that we know not, and blesses us not only without, but even against, our own plans and inclinations.

The recollections which I had of what I had heard and seen when I lived under my uncle's roof, had left in my mind a prejudice against their kind of religion as enthusiastic and carrying matters to excess; and it was with no small surprise I found on conversing with my friend on the subject of religion, that his principles and views were the same with those of the clergymen who were called Methodistical; this led to renewed discussions, and Milner (never backward in avowing his opinions, or entering into religious conversation) justified his principles by referring to the word of God. This led to our reading the Scriptures together, and by degrees I imbibed his sentiments; though I must confess with shame, that they long remained merely as opinions assented to by my understanding, but not influencing my heart. At length, however, I began to be impressed with a sense of the weighty truths, which were more or less the continual subjects of our conversation. I began to think what folly it was, nay, what madness, to continue month after month, nay, day after day, in a state in which a sudden call out of the world, which I was conscious might happen at any moment, would consign me to never-ending misery, while at the very same time I was firmly convinced from assenting to the great truths taught us in the New Testament, that the offers of the gospel were universal and free, in short that happiness, eternal happiness, was at my option.

As soon as I reflected seriously upon these subjects, the deep guilt and black ingratitude of my past life forced itself upon me in the strongest colours. I condemned myself for having wasted my precious time, and opportunities, and talents; and for several months I continued to feel the deepest convictions of my own sinfulness, rendered only the more intense by the unspeakable mercies of our God and Saviour declared to us in the offers and promises of the gospel. These however by degrees produced in me something of a settled peace of con-

science. I devoted myself for whatever might be the term of my future life, to the service of my God and Saviour, and, with many infirmities and deficiencies, through His help I continue until this day.

Conscious of my having sadly wasted my time and neglected my opportunities of improvement, I began to consider how I might best redeem whatever of life might remain to me. Parliamentary business both of a public and private nature (for wherever any landed, commercial, or manufacturing interest was in question, the county of York was interested) found me full employment for my time during the sitting of the House. I therefore considered how to employ my recess to the most advantage. Accordingly so soon as parliament was prorogued, I commonly settled myself, except for occasional residence at Buxton or Bath when my health required it, in the house of some intimate friend, chiefly at Mr. Gisborne's and Mr. Babington's, who kindly also received my mother and sister, where I was allowed the entire command of my own time, and was very little incommoded by country hospitalities. I breakfasted in my own room, dined with the family, and resumed my studies in the evening, joining the family party when I took my little supper half an hour or an hour before bedtime.

This may be a proper time for mentioning the uncommon kindness and liberality which I experienced from my constituents. In former times the county members displayed their equipages annually at the races, and constituted a part of the grand jury at the summer assizes; the latter indeed I should have been glad to attend but for the unseemly festivities which commonly take place at that period; I was not however wanted; the number of gentlemen of large fortune in the county was far more than sufficient to constitute a most respectable grand jury both at the spring and summer assizes. I could not consistently with my principles frequent the theatre and ball-room, and I knew that I should give offence by staying away were I actually at York; but no discontent was ever expressed at my not presenting

myself to the county on these occasions. My friends appeared tacitly to admit my claim to the command of my own time during the recess, satisfied with my attending to their and the public interest during the session of Parliament. In fact no man I believe was ever more punctual in his attendance on the House of Commons than myself. I was always in my place on the first day of the session, and I do not remember having been ever absent on the last, excepting once when I was drawn into the country a day or two before the prorogation by the illness of some of my family; occasionally also I was present at the county meetings, and when there I always took an active part in their proceedings.

That gracious Providence which all my life long has directed my course with mercy and goodness, and which in so many instances known only to myself has called forth my wonder and gratitude, was signally manifested in the first formation of my parliamentary connexion with the county of York, and in its unintermitted and long continuance. Had the change in my religious principles taken place a year sooner, humanly speaking I never could have become member for Yorkshire. The means I took, and the exertions I made, in pursuing that object, were such as I could not have used after my religious change; I should not have thought it right to carve for myself so freely, if I may use the phrase, (to shape my course for myself so confidently,) nor should I have adopted the methods by which I ingratiated myself in the good-will of some of my chief supporters; neither after my having adopted the principles I now hold, could I have conformed to the practices by which alone any man would be elected for any of the places in which I had any natural influence or connexion. . . .

My having been member for Hull gave me the opportunity of making myself known as a public man; it led to my formation of political connexions, and to my cultivation of the art of public speaking—all of which were among the means that prepared the way for my representing the county.

All circumstances considered.. my mercantile origin,

my want of connexion or acquaintance with any of the nobility or gentry of Yorkshire . . my being elected for that great county appears to me upon the retrospect to have been so utterly improbable that I cannot but wonder—and in truth I ascribe it to a providential intimation—that the idea of my obtaining that high honour suggested itself to my imagination and in fact fixed itself within my mind. I mentioned it as a possible event to one or two private friends, but not to Mr. Pitt or any of my political connexions; yet entertaining this idea, I carefully prepared myself for the public debate that was soon to follow in the face of the whole county, and both at the public meeting and in the subsequent discussions which took place in the miscellaneous body of Mr. Pitt's supporters, it was this idea which regulated the line as well as animated the spirit of my exertions.

His own conduct. Without date or title.

I CANNOT deny that from associating with men of the world, and hearing their principles, and calculations, and prospects, the ideas of aggrandizement would sometimes present themselves to my mind, and court my adoption. Various gentlemen were raised to the Upper House, whom the partiality we feel where we ourselves are in question, might excuse my considering as having no better pretensions than myself to such an elevation: and besides the solid advantages of a permanent seat in the legislature, the securing of which involved the possessor in no expense or trouble, the Upper House appeared from various considerations to afford a more favourable field for bringing forward religious and moral improvements, the neglect of which, I had almost said the entire forgetfulness of them, has long appeared to me to be the grand defect of all our modern statesmen (for the last century). How different in this respect are they, though

blessed with the light of Christianity, from the great legislators of antiquity, in whom the conservation or improvement of the national morals was always the primary object of their care! My fortune too was greater than that of some of those who were raised to the peerage; and at that time I thought it far the most probable that I should never enter into married life. But a little reflection beat down at once all such worldly appetencies. Since there could be no possible plea of a public nature, my exaltation would appear, and truly appear, to arise solely from my own request, and therefore would not merely have exhibited the show, but the reality, of my carving for myself, (if I may so express myself,) of being the artificer of my own fortune; whereas the true Christian, deeming it to be his duty to pursue the course that will be most agreeable to the will of God, endeavours to discover the path of duty from the indications of the Divine will to be collected from the passing events and circumstances, considered in combination with his own qualifications and dispositions: his grand inquiry continuing always the same, how he may best promote the glory of God, and secure his own salvation and that of those whose interests are consigned by Providence to his care.

Independently however of all religious considerations, it appeared to me that no little injury had been done to the credit and character of the House of Commons by the numerous peerages that were granted to men who had no public claims to such a distinction, and whose circumstances clearly manifested that borough or parliamentary interest was the basis of their elevation: hence the inference formerly to be drawn from the support of commoners of large landed property, that the ministers who enjoyed it enjoyed also the esteem and confidence of the public, was no longer to be drawn; nor were such men entitled to more credit for the independence and purity of their political support than the representatives of the most ordinary boroughs. Various were the instances of country gentlemen of family and fortune, who appeared for a time to be honouring government by their

support, sometimes in opposition to their family habits or political connexions, when at length out came the Gazette, proclaiming the explanation of their conduct, or at least bringing it into doubt with those who were disposed to suspect the purity of politicians. An example therefore appeared to me to be required of a contrary kind, nor could it be exhibited more properly than in the instance of one who having been some time member for the greatest county in England, and being also the personal intimate of the prime minister, might be supposed likely to have been able, if he had made the endeavour, to succeed in obtaining the object of his wishes. Nor could the world, always sufficiently acute in discerning the faults and infirmities of those who profess to have more respect than ordinary for religion, have failed to notice the inconsistency of eagerness for worldly aggrandizement in one, whose principles ought to have moderated his desire of earthly distinctions, and to have rendered him even jealous of an advancement which would be likely to augment his temptations, and thereby increase the danger of his making shipwreck of his faith.

If such were my conclusions in the circumstances in which I was then placed, how much have they been strengthened since I have been blessed with a family! No one who forms his opinions from the word of God can doubt, that in proportion to a man's rank and fortune the difficulty of his progress in the narrow road and his ultimate admission into heaven is augmented; and no Christian can possibly doubt its being a parent's first duty to promote his children's spiritual advancement and everlasting happiness; but were the comfort in this life only the object in view, no one at my time of life who has contemplated life with an observant eye, and who has looked into the interior of family life, can entertain a doubt that the probability of passing through the world with comfort, and of forming such connexions as may be most likely to ensure the enjoyment of domestic and social happiness, is far greater in the instance of persons of the rank of private gentlemen, than of that of noblemen who are naturally led to associate with people of

their own rank—the sons being led to make fortune their primary object in the forming of matrimonial connexions that they may be able to maintain their stations in society. As for the daughters, private gentlemen of moderate fortunes, and clergymen, and even still more mercantile men, have few opportunities of cultivating an intimacy with them, and are afraid of venturing upon a connexion for life with partners whose opinions and habits have been formed on a scale disproportionate to the resources of people of moderate fortunes.

THE END.

INDEX.

A.

Abolition of Slave Trade defeated, i. 230, 248, 276—Bill passes House of Commons, 307—defeated again, 315—final passage, ii. 17.

Adult schools, ii. 152.

Alexander, Emperor of Russia, ii. 141—letter to, on convention for general Abolition, 145—interview with, 145—letter to, ii. 244.

Allen, William, his character, ii. 89.

America, interest for, i. 123, ii. 74, 90, 109.

Ante-room, Mr. Wilberforce's described, i. 104.

Austerlitz, battle of, i. 321.

Augereau, ii. 260.

B.

Bible Society established, i. 288.

Bishop of Gloucester, character of, ii. 221.

Blucher, message from, ii. 165.

Buonaparte, ii. 317.

Burke, Right Hon. Edmund, his estimate of Mr. W.'s eloquence, i. 94—death-bed approbation of 'Practical Christianity,' 216.

Burleigh, Lord, his reply to Walsingham, i. 319.

VOL. II.

C.

Canning, i. 255, ii. 57, 215, 244.

Carey, Dr. his character, ii. 125.

Cecil, Rev. R. i. 149.

Challenged, i. 135.

Christian Observer, established, i. 244.

Charities, Wilberforce's, i. 241, 269.

Chalmers, ii. 182.

Cheddar, establishment of schools at, i. 96.

Christophe, correspondence with, ii. 195, 211, 232.

Church patronage, i. 235.

Corn Law Bill and riots, ii. 159.

Cœlebs, ii. 49.

D.

Death of mother, i. 238.

Death of sister, ii. 173.

Death of daughter, ii. 238.

Death, his own feelings in prospect of, ii. 314.

Duel, challenged to, i. 135.

Duel, Pitt and Tierney, i. 231.

Duel, Grattan and Corry, i. 255.

Duel, Canning and Castlereagh, ii. 57.

E.

Earlham family, ii. 172.

Edgeworth, Miss, her Tales, ii. 63.

Election for Hull, i. 20.

Election, for Yorkshire, i. 37, 109, 277, ii. 27.

East India, interest for, i. 152, ii. 40, 92, 120.

Elwes, John, (the miser), ii. 276.

Escape, providential, i. 299.

F.

Falkland, Lord, ii. 222.

Female Anti-Slavery Associations, objections to, ii. 278.

Finley, visit to, in Newgate, i. 284.

Franklin, Dr. Benjamin, i. 32.

French levity, ii. 277.

French Revolutionary principles, spread of, i. 143.

Fox, Right Hon. C. becomes premier, ii. 13—supports Abolition, 15—death, 19, 275, 276.

G.

Gaming, cured of, i. 22.

Gisborne, Rev. T. i. 18.

Gurney, Joseph John, Esq. ii. 172—his character of Mr. Wilberforce, ii. 317.

H.

Habeas Corpus Suspension Bill, i. 171.

Hall, Robert, i. 309, ii. 98, 245.

Hayti, interest for, ii. 194.

Heber, Reginald, (afterwards Bishop of Calcutta,) his first introduction to Wilberforce, ii. 24.

J.

Jay, John, Esq. (American envoy,) i. 167.

Jenner, letter to, i. 286.

Johnson, Dr. ii. 205, 276, 317.

L.

La Fayette, Marquis de, reasons for supporting the motion for his release, i. 202.

Lakes, visit to, ii. 205.

Latrobe, Rev. C. Ignatius, his letter on the origin of the Abolition of the Slave Trade, i. 73.

Londonderry, Marquis of, his death, ii. 242, 275.

Loss of fortune, ii. 295.

M.

Mackintosh, Sir James, ii. 25.

Marriage, i. 220.

Martyn, Rev. Henry, his character of Mr. Wilberforce, i. 303.

Methodists, i. 245, 257.

Middle Passage Bill, i. 84.

Milner, Dr. Isaac, accompanies Wilberforce to Nice, i. 39—his religious principles, 43.

Milner, Dean, death of, ii. 225.

Mimicry, Wilberforce cured of the practice of, by Lord Camden, i. 26.

More, Hannah, i. 95, 97.

More, Martha, (sister of Hannah,) death of, ii. 220.

N.

Neckar, i. 32.

Nelson, Lord, i. 319.

Newgate, visit to, i. 284.

Newton, Rev. John, visit to, i. 53—letters to and from, 53, 212.

Not at home, i. 270.

O.

Owen, Robert, Esq. of Lanark, ii. 113, 224.

P.

Patronage, government, use and abuse of, i. 235.

Perceval, Right Hon. Spencer, his assassination, ii. 95.

Pitt, Right Hon. William, wit of, i. 22—intimacy with, 25—escapes being shot by Mr. Wilberforce, 29—visits France with Wilberforce, 29—advised to become a suitor for Neckar's daughter, 32—political quarrel, 169—renewal of friendship, 175—his duel with Tierney, 231—last illness, and death, 321.

Prayer, feelings respecting, ii. 320.

'Practical Christianity,' work on, i. 111—published, 211.

Prince Regent, (afterwards George IV.) interviews with, ii. 167.

Q.

Quaker, interview with, ii. 163.

Quakers' Relief Bill, i. 193.

Queen, ii. 228.

R.

Richmond, Rev. Legh, i. 250, ii. 53.

Roman Catholic Emancipation, i. 268, ii. 42, 114.

Roberts, correspondence with, ii. 75.

Romilly, Sir S. speech of, ii. 22, 214.

S.

Sabbath, love for, i. 91.

St. Paul's smaller Epistles, ii. 318.

Scott, Rev. Thomas, i. 245, ii. 99, 242, 245.

Scott, Sir Walter, ii. 242, 274, 280.

Sedition Bills, i. 182—Yorkshire meeting in support of, 185.

Sheridan, Richard Brinsley, Esq. ii. 105, 275.

Sierra Leone, i. 123.

Slave Trade, Mr. Wilberforce's condemnation of, at the age of fourteen, i. 17—causes which led him to the Abolition of, 73—Wilberforce brings forward the question of Abolition, 79—Slave Trade Abolition Bill passes the Commons, but is lost in the Lords, 308—Abolition Bill passes both Houses, ii. 17.

Society for the Reformation of Manners, establishment of, i. 70.

Southey, Robert, LL. D., ii. 180, 204, 206, 209, 210.

Stael, Madame de, ii. 134.

Sunday travelling, ii. 49.

Sunday Association, i. 228.

T.

Test and Corporation Acts, i. 105.

Thornton, John, Esq. i. 14—letter from, 58—his death and character, 113.

Toleration Act, i. 256.

Toussaint Louverture, ii. 317.

V.

Vaccination, i. 285.

Venn, Rev. John, i. 281.

Vicar of Wakefield, ii. 100.

W.

Waterloo, battle of, ii. 165.

Watts, Dr. Isaac, his 'Hymns for Children,' ii. 288.

Wesley, Rev. John, i. 100—his 'last words,' 117.

Wicked Williams, i. 219.

Windham, character of, ii. 244.

Wordsworth, ii. 207.

Wellington, Duke of, ii. 323.

WILBERFORCE WILLIAM,

1768. Transferred, on the death of his father, to the care of his uncle at Wimbledon, i. 14—his early acquaintance with Scripture, and habits of devotion, 15.

1771. Removed, by his mother, from the care of his uncle, to Hull, i. 15—enters into the gaieties and amusements of that town, 16—his talents for general society, and skill in singing, 16.

1773. His early abomination of the Slave Trade, i. 17.

1776. Entered at St. John's College, Cambridge, i. 17—picture of his college life by the Rev. T. Gisborne, 18—by himself, and by Lord Clarendon, 19.

1780. Resolves to enter upon public life, and canvasses for the town of Hull, i. 20—repairs to London to secure the non-resident freemen, 20—frequents the gallery of the House of Commons, 20—forms an intimacy with Mr. Pitt, 20—his coming of age celebrated, 20—returned for Hull, 21—comes to London, and elected a member of the leading clubs, and immersed in politics and fashion, cured of gambling, 22.

1781. Makes his first speech in the House of Commons, i. 24—residence at Rayrigg, on the banks of Windermere, 24.

1782. Opposes Lord North's administration, i. 24—intimacy with Mr. Pitt, 25—danger from social qualities, 26.

1783. Cured by Lord Camden of the art of mimicry, i. 26—his dangers from the temptation of ambition, 26—foreign tour with Pitt and Eliot, 29.

1784. Great meeting at York against the coalition, i. 34—forms the project of standing for Yorkshire, 36—suddenly proposed to represent the county, 36—elected for Hull, 37—travels to Nice, accompanied by Isaac Milner, 42—change of character, 48—explains his views to his friends, 52—interview with Newton, 53.

1787. Establishes the Society for the Reformation of Manners, i. 70—travels round the country to insure the success of his plan, 71—devotes himself to the Abolition of the Slave Trade, 73.

1789. New year, commences a time-account, i. 91—prepares to move for the Abolition, 93—brings the question before the House, 94—visits Hannah More, 96—visit to Cheddar—assists in the establishment of schools there, 97.

1790. Supports Test Act, i. 105—re-elected for Yorkshire, 109.

1791. Moves the Abolition question, i. 117.

1792. Carries motion for gradual abolition, i. 132—in personal danger from Kimber, 135—French citizenship

- conferred on him by the Convention, 140.
1793. His first great difference with Pitt, i. 147—is prevented from speaking against war with France, 148—brings forward his plan for national religious instruction for India, 152—begins his work on 'Practical Christianity,' 156.
1794. Opposes Mr. Pitt, i. 168—moves amendment to address, 169.
1795. Offends opposition, 171—his intercourse with Pitt renewed, 175—his constituents displeased, 178—tour in Yorkshire, 180—attends the Yorkshire meeting in support of the Treason and Sedition Bills, 185—gives notice that he will renew his Abolition motion, 190.
1796. Obtains leave to bring in his Abolition Bill, i. 191—defeated, 193; supports Quakers' Relief Bill, 193—sets off for Hull, 194—cavasses the county, 195—is re-elected, 196—supports motion for release of La Fayette, 202.
1797. Illness, visit to Bath, i. 207—"Practical Christianity" published, 211—resolves to marry, 217—his marriage, 220—engaged in establishing the Church Missionary Society, 226.
1798. Association for the Better Observance of Sunday, i. 228—again brings forward the Abolition question, 230—gives notice of a motion on Pitt's duel, and relinquishes it on finding that Pitt would retire from public life, 232—writes letter on church preferment, 235—his charities, 241—engaged in establishing the 'Christian Observer,' 244—exertions on behalf of Jersey Methodists, 245.
1799. Brings forward his motion for immediate Abolition, i. 247—supports Lord Belgrave's Sunday Newspaper Bill, 250—temporary retirement to Bath, 251.
1800. Occupied about scarcity, i. 256—defeats an attempt to alter Toleration Act, 257—alarm for Mrs. Wilberforce, 263—engaged in attempts to remedy the distress of the lower classes, 266.
1801. Declines office, i. 269—visits Bath, 270—estimate of Mr. Pitt, 272.
1802. Makes effort for general Abolition, i. 274—to prevent importation of slaves into Trinidad, 275—re-elected for Yorkshire, 277.
1803. Visit to Finley in Newgate, i. 283—interest for Jenner, 286—engaged in framing Bible Society, 288—opposes ministry, 290—attends York meeting, 292—providential escape, 299.
1804. Endeavouring to keep Pitt and Addington in amity, i. 304—carries his Abolition motion through the Commons, 308.
1805. Abolition Bill defeated, i. 315.
1806. Brought to town by Pitt's illness, i. 321—employed in promoting a subscription to pay Pitt's death, 322.
1807. Engaged in carrying Abolition Bill through both

- Houses, ii. 17—re-elected for Yorkshire, 20—opposes grant for Maynooth College, 24—Abolition Bill passed, and congratulations, 25—his feeling on success, 26—sets off for York, 28—speech at Hull, 30—extraordinary canvass, 31—immense subscription, 34—is returned for the sixth time, 34.
1808. Efforts for benefit of India, ii. 39—Opposes Maynooth College grant, but supports Roman Catholic Emancipation, 42—active on Smithfield market Committee, 43—prevents Sunday travelling to Parliament, 49.
1809. Attends Bible Society anniversary, ii. 50—retires to parsonage near Newport Pagnell, 52.
1810. Opposes motion for sending Sir Francis Burdett to the tower, ii. 58—serious accident, 59.
1811. Befriends dissenters, ii. 72—opposes war with America, 74—correspondence with Mr. Roberts, 75—decision to retire from the representation of Yorkshire, 84.
1812. Efforts to prevent war with America, ii. 90—promote Christianity in India, 92—his exertions for the welfare of religious societies, 94—supports provision for Mr. Perceval's family, 97—announces his determination to retire from Yorkshire, 101—is returned for the borough of Bramber, 105.
1813. Supports motion for Roman Catholic Emancipation, i. 114—efforts for Christianizing India, 117—East India measure carried, 124.
1814. Exertions for relief and instruction of Lascars in England, ii. 131—and procuring aid for German sufferers, 133—engaged on letter to the Emperor Alexander, 141—censures treaty with France, 144—interview with Emperor Alexander, 145.
1815. Buonaparte abolishes Slave Trade, ii. 154—death of Henry Thornton and John Bowdler, 155—supports Corn Law Bill, and his house endangered by the rioters, 159—reflections on the battle of Waterloo, 165—interview with Prince Regent, 167—death of Mrs. Henry Thornton, 167.
1816. Efforts for emancipation, ii. 170—death of his sister, 173—made member of Secret Committee, 176.
1817. Correspondence with his children, ii. 178—busy on Haytian correspondence, 194.
1818. Visit to the Lakes, ii. 203—makes efforts for benefit of Hayti, 211.
1819. Supports Quakers' petition on severity of Penal Code, ii. 214—attends numerous annual public meetings, 214—correspondence with his children, 216—opposes motion on Owen of Lanark's plan, 224.
1820. Sick-bed visits, ii. 225—engaged in proceedings relating to the conduct of Queen Caroline, 228.
1821. Supports motion for restoring Queen's name to the Liturgy, ii. 234—contemplates retirement from public life, 236—his secret thoughts on recovery, 236—

- death of his eldest daughter, 237—takes retrospect of past life, 239.
1822. Takes retrospect of his college life, 246.
1823. Intrusts the cause of Slavery Emancipation to Mr. Fowell Buxton, ii. 252.
1824. His declining health, ii. 262—his last speech in Parliament, 262.
1825. Projects Bill for lessening the number of oaths, ii. 266—retires from Parliament, 268—purchases Highwood Hill, 272.
1826. Settles at Highwood, ii. 280.
1827. Mode of passing his time at Highwood, ii. 284.
1828. Engaged in preparations for erecting his chapel on Highwood Hill, ii. 294.
1831. Leaves his house at Highwood, ii. 301.
1832. Retirement to his sons' parsonages in Kent and the Isle of Wight, ii. 301—mode of passing his day, 305—his feelings at this time on the Slave Trade, and on the principle of compensation, 311.
1833. Last visit to Bath, ii. 312—last illness—his calmness of mind—his conversations, 315.

Y.

- Yorkshire meeting, i. 35.
- Yorkshire, first election for, i. 37.
 second do. i. 109.
 third do. i. 277.
 great contest, ii. 27.



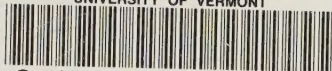


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